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ABSTRACT

Developing an effective communications program is crucial for the survival of colleges, universities, and independent schools because they must be well understood and have broad public support. This guide to media relations compiles articles from "CASE Currents" into five sections: "The Basics of a News Service" (17 papers); "So You Want National Media Coverage" (15 papers); "Building Bridges or Burning Them: How To Work With the Media" (4 papers); "The Printed Word" (12 papers); and "Broadcasting Your Message" (14 papers). Each section provides a wide variety of papers by different authors with advice on running a successful media relations program. Some papers and authors include: "How To Hire a Talented News Bureau Director" (Richard J. Pokrass); "How To Get Coverage Without Releases" (George B. Eager); "Using PR Tools to Boost Recruitment" (Irma L. Rabbino); "The Wizardry of Computer Connections" (Suzanne R. Green); "Six Steps to More National Coverage" (Phil Zimmer); "Tips on National Coverage" (Nancy Raley); "Judgment Calls" (Jane C. Lareau); "Marketing Your Own Iacocca" (Donald R. Perkins); "Tap Into the Wires" (Dick Jones); "Scientific Methods" (Mary Ruth Yoe); "Working with Television News" (Paul D. Lowenberg); "Writing Broadcast News" (Harry Durham); "Guidelines for Visiting TV News Directors" (Arthur V. Ciervo); "Wired for Cable?" (Harry Durham); "Broadcasting Terms" (Annette H. Lee); "Effective Public Service Announcements" (Lee); and "Why Public Service Advertising Doesn't Work" (Joe Adams).(SM)

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The New Guide to Effective Media Relations

Nancy Raley and Laura Carter, Editors

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The Best of CASE CURRENTS

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The New Guide to Effective Media Relations

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Foreword

To serve society and the public interest to their full potential, our colleges, universities, and independent schools must be better understood and must deserve and enjoy broad, substantive public support. Establishing an effective communications program is vital to achieving this understanding and support. Thus, this completely revised edition of one of CASE's most popular best sellers comes at just the right moment.

The New Guide to Effective Media Relations covers every aspect of building a news service that will tell the institution's story, not only to its own constituencies but to the wider national public. This book replaces the third edition of *Making Your News Service More Effective,* which since 1977 has been helping both newcomers and experienced professionals in the field do their jobs better. Its five sections give you practical counsel on running a media relations program from "The Basics of a News Service" to "Broadcast Your Message," which contains new material on this rapidly changing technology. Among many other things, you can learn ways to use your computer in public relations, how to attract national media attention to your independent school, how to launch an op-ed program, and how to help your president stay cool under the hot lights of TV.

But beyond these useful techniques, readers must keep in mind the higher meaning of their communications efforts. The goal of an effective news service program is not just to show the institution in the best light, not to broadcast strengths while papering over weaknesses. The ideal media relations program should also deal honestly with the institution's shortcomings and report efforts underway to correct them. It should be forthright and assertive, not defensive—seeking better ways to respond to the barrage of criticism that has flowed education's way in recent years.

The purpose of our communications program should be to establish a *two-way* dialogue; we need to be heard but we also need to listen. We must address the public in terms of the needs they perceive they have and then respond accordingly—and in ways that do not contradict the proper nature and functioning of our colleges, universities, and independent schools in serving great social purposes.

CASE has added public affairs programs that bond higher education to the public interest to the ways we carry out our mission. Other initiatives include further improving service to begining, mid-level, and senior professionals and launching new services to our member institutions. All of these are means to the end of building public understanding and support of education for the benefit of society. We encourage you to use the techniques outlined here to help accomplish this lofty and vitally necessary goal.

Gary H. Quehl
CASE President
December 1987

Section 1

The Basics of A News Service

Small Shop Survival Manual

by Nancy Harper

We, the willing led by the unknowing, are doing the impossible for the ungrateful. We have done so much with so little for so long, we are now qualified to do anything with nothing.

If you are sitting at your work-laden desk thinking that someone wrote a poem just about you, don't worry. A lot of others are thinking the same thing.

The words could apply to almost any worker these days. But they have special meaning for managers of one- or two-person information offices. With small budgets and no staffs, some of you hold titles that read like a one-man band sounds.

While we cannot put dollars into your printing fund or send you Pulitzer Prize-winning writers to help, we can offer suggestions that might make your work easier and help you survive.

Most of the suggestions are your own. Some came from your responses to a survey conducted by Art Ciervo, formerly director of public information and relations at Penn State, now director of Arthur Ciervo and Associates, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Ciervo surveyed news bureau managers at 80 small colleges around the country. Jayne Zenaty, formerly acting director of public relations at Clarke College, drew together ideas from 20 small bureau managers.

The first nine ideas came from Philip Lesly, head of the Philip Lesly Company, a public relations firm in Chicago. He suggests that you first recognize that, with all its problems, the one- or two-person department affords you an exceptional opportunity to become a generalist when almost all forces in our field are shaping specialists. The person who cannot call on others to perform specialized tasks learns to do everything. In the process, that person stretches his or her mind.

Nancy Harper, formerly assistant editor of CURRENTS, now owns Harper Associates, a strategic marketing firm in Lawrence, Kansas.

Lesly's laws

1. *Educate your administrators on the comparative value of the different jobs under your responsibility.* Since you can't do everything, they should realize that it is good judgment and good management to neglect lesser matters in order to complete important projects.

2. *Keep a log of your activities, and note for whom each is performed.* This will help you prove what you've done, and how much time you've spent on it. In addition, you will also be able to tell the percentage of your total work devoted to each department or project.

3. *"Charge" time to each area.* Operate as if you were an agency charging each unit on the basis of time spent and the share of the budget needed to get the work done. The list can help you resist unwarranted demands on your time and budget and might help you get added staff for special projects.

4. *Analyze the abilities of your secretary, if you have one.* Can that person write, handle media inquiries, set up events, and work with printers? Delegate as much work as possible.

5. *Organize your time so that planning and creativity are not lost in the scramble of everyday work.*

6. *Try to mechanize routine jobs and inquiries as much as possble.* Prepare and keep up-to-date files of canned materials that can be used to meet a large number of inquiries.

7. *Recruit volunteers, probably students, to do legwork and research.* Get young people who want to gain experience and build up references. And, when they demonstrate the skills they've acquired, give them recognition—a letter of recommendation or thank-you in your literature.

8. *Don't have a luncheon meeting for something that can be done in eight minutes on the phone.* Use your lunch hour for important meetings and planning.

9. *Don't sacrifice reading.* You need to keep current and expand your horizons.

Zenaty's zingers

1. *Each week, outline the events you must publicize.* Identify the media to be contacted, the dates you would like the stories to run, and the deadlines you must meet. Update the outline weekly and try to stay two weeks ahead.

2. *Write in one day all the routine news releases for upcoming events.* This often allows you to put more than one release in each envelope and saves time and postage.

3. *Investigate piggyback coverage with other colleges.* If you spot a trend, for example, contact the news services at other local colleges and combine the information in a feature.

4. *Don't downgrade the importance of hometown releases, but don't spend all your time on them either.* Send a copy of the release to the student's parents, with a letter requesting a clipping from the hometown paper. Often, the parent will call the editor of the paper if the story does not appear.

5. *Get help from students by using the old Tom Sawyer trick: Make the work a status symbol.* With student photographers, for example, pay them as well as you're able to, and fire those who don't measure up to high standards. Look into having some students earn academic credit for working in your office.

6. *Plan ahead.* Use slack times, if there are any, to write skeleton releases for annual events such as graduation, orientation, and homecoming.

7. *Deal with problems immediately.* Today's 10-minute phone call to an unhappy faculty member could save you from a bothersome hour-long meeting next week.

8. *Know your resources.* Ask a research librarian to select bibliographies that might help you revise your mailing list. From the alumni association, get names of alumni who could help place your news stories in their local papers or on TV or radio.

9. *Put a flower on your desk.* Once a day, look at it and consider the benefits you derive from being your own boss.

Ciervo's suggestions

1. *Set priorities.* Many small-staff news directors follow these priorities: (a) deadlines, (b) demands of the administration, and (c) media requests. Don't,

however, spend too much time meeting the demands of the most vocal or most persistent requests. Put another way, resist the attitude that "the squeaking wheel gets the grease."

2. *Use the telephone instead of spending that time running all over the campus.*

3. *Encourage reporters to write their own stories about your institution.* This will save you time and increase your chances of having the story appear.

4. *Try, when possible, to get other employees of your college involved in public relations.* The president, for example, might like to write his or her own speeches.

5. *Use secretarial staff or students to do hometown releases; give them a sample release for guidance.* Clip stories from the student newspaper and alumni magazine, and mail the clippings to hometown editors for use in their newspapers.

6. *Ask departments to prepare copy as completely as possible, and do as much background research as they can, thereby reducing the amount of research your office needs to do.*

7. *Eliminate sending news releases to other colleges and universities.*

8. *Select and target your releases.*.

9. *Periodically review mailing lists and eliminate people who aren't using your material or who don't want it.* Completely review and revise your mailing lists at least once a year.

10. *Recycle your own paper.* Reuse envelopes for campus mail and reuse old releases (yours and those that come in) for scratch paper and for writing drafts of releases, letters, or memos.

11. *When possible, mail two or three releases in the same envelope.*

12. *When possible, use AP or UPI to disseminate your story.* This eliminates mailing to many outlets.

13. *To save some time and effort in correspondence, answer some letters with notes on the bottoms of the original letters.* You can make a photocopy for your file.

14. *Pick up your pictures after they've run in the local papers and use them again.* Also, get pictures from other offices on campus to help build your photo file.

How to Hire a Talented News Bureau Director

by Richard J. Pokrass

High school and college students frequently ask me, "What does it take to be a media relations or news service director at a college?"

These students and many other people see media relations work as glamorous, financially rewarding, exciting, and fun. They even ask how I enjoy "wining and dining" the press, alumni, and opinion leaders in the community.

I have to smile when I hear questions like this. They reflect some of the myths about college and university news services.

This field is not for the person looking for an easy job, an extraordinary starting salary, or fabulous working conditions. In fact, news service directors and their staffs usually work under the constant pressure of deadlines, numerous demands on their time, and shifting priorities. And usually, the successful news service director has labored long and hard to perfect communication and managerial skills.

Naturally, a good news director should be an excellent writer and editor. He or she should also be willing to work beyond the normal nine-to-five day when necessary.

But what are the personal qualities of a good news director? Based on an informal survey of CASE professionals, here are a number you should look for in hiring a news service director:

- *Good news sense.* The best news bureau director is the one who sends out only stories that are of interest. "If a story isn't going to be used, don't sent it out," says Michele Wiley, associate director of university relations, University of Oregon Health Sciences Center.

Philip B. Schaeffer, associate vice president for university relations, Temple University, notes that the news service director should "not be awed by faculty, high-level administrators, trustees, editors, reporters, news directors, or public officials."

He adds, "This person must continually see story possibilities . . . imbedded in national issues, trends, fads; be able to write well enough to impress editors; and edit dull copy so it sparkles." If the director has been a full-time reporter or feature writer, these traits are finely tuned.

- *Personal integrity.* "The best person has the highest credibility possible within the university and outside with the news media, " says Wiley. This person "never stops asking questions; this person questions even the president, or anyone in the university whose story we are telling. The news service director must check, even with outside sources, to be sure the story as we are portraying it is accurate."

- *Strong verbal communication skills.* According to Irma Rabbino, director of public relations, Mount Holyoke College, the news service director should have the "ability to talk to and elicit information from the faculty, and to translate technical and obscure material into the layman's language."

- *Initiative.* He or she should be a self-starter and need minimal supervision. The person should also have a broad range of interests and not be easily bored by things that are not of keen personal interest.

- *Versatility.* Finally, the person you're seeking to head your news bureau should be flexible. The ability to adapt to changing needs is an important characteristic of the effective news service director.

Richard J. Pokrass is director of public information at Burlington Community College.

How to Test for News Judgment

by George Dehne

Identifying talented newswriters or publicists for entry-level and intermediate positions challenges even the experienced public relations manager. It's relatively easy to judge writing ability, poise, and personality, but it's more difficult to determine whether a candidate has a flair for promotion.

How do you test for the elusive characteristics of a creative spirit, news judgment, confidence, a sense of timing, and the ability to make even the mundane come alive? I've been trying to answer that question for some time.

When I was director of college relations at Carleton College, I developed an aptitude test to help me find someone to head our news bureau. I hired the young woman who scored highest on the test.

A journalism major with only one term's experience as an undergraduate in a college news bureau, Ruth Stevens lived up to all my expectations. In six months, she placed six regional and national wire service stories, prompted several articles in Minneapolis and St. Paul newspapers, and arranged many radio and television interviews.

I designed the test to be administered as part of the interview. This allows you to interpret the answers, and it removes the fear associated with testing per se. There are absolutely no correct answers—only answers that are possibly wrong. The following excerpts are from the longer aptitude test.

- *General awareness.* Nothing is more important in a news operation than a breadth of knowledge and an appreciation of current events. To test for this quality, give the candidate a list of academic majors offered by your institution. Ask: "Which of these departments are apt most consistently to have the greatest news and feature possibilities?"

Obviously, if yours is a major university, the professional schools, especially the medical, business, and law schools, should be the candidate's first response. At smaller liberal arts colleges, the candidates should identify the social science departments (economics, sociology, psychology, anthropology, political science, education). These areas deal with everyday human problems, and even the most elementary research by a student or faculty member can attract media attention. Ask the candidate who argues for music, physical education, or humanities to explain his or her opinion fully.

Give the candidate a list of special majors and ask: "In which of these areas are you most likely to find a spokesperson who could be quoted today on an issue of current concern?" Give several possibilities.

If you have concentrations in a specific area (Latin American, women's, environmental, or black studies), you can learn a great deal about the imagination and general knowledge of a candidate by his or her response.

The candidate should be able to identify a current national or international event that is related to a special major. For example, a professor in the Latin American studies program might discuss a coup d'etat in Latin America or the director of the environmental studies program may have a strong opinion on a faster but noisier jet.

- *News judgment.* Knowing what works with the media admittedly involves experience, but it also demands an inherent "feel" for the game. To test for news judgment, find seven feature stories released by your institution. (Avoid obvious stories such as medical breakthroughs.) Select two releases that were used nationally, two used regionally, two picked up by a local daily or weekly, and one that fell flat. Have the stories retyped on plain stationery or have them all carefully summarized. Ask the candidate to identify the national, regional, and local stories. Also mention that one was not used by a media outlet.

If the candidate is able to "second guess" the news media, he or she will identify the six stories correctly. If the candidate confuses a national with a regional story or a local with a regional article, there is probably no harm done. But if the candidate confuses local and national story or selects the unused article as a national story, you have a problem.

- *Efficiency.* Each news story must be exploited to the fullest. Choosing specific outlets takes experience, but each candidate should be able to identify general areas. Ask the candidate: "Suppose you have written a feature article on a professor who has developed computer sculptures. How many potential media outlets can you suggest?"

The sharp candidate should mention art magazines, computer publications, art critics, science publications, feature reporters for television stations, and the school's alumni publication, as well as the local and national outlets. I came up with 15 possible outlets.

Select several stories that work best at certain times of the year. I use 10 examples. For instance, you would release an article about a book on political humor in November. You would distribute a faculty member's theory on how movies reflect societal values in March prior to the Academy Awards presentation. Ask the candidate: "Assume these stories can be held indefinitely and released when you think they would have the best chance of success. In which month(s) would you release these stories?"

- *Creative spirit.* It doesn't take a journalism degree to know that the lead is the critical ingredient of a news release. Give the candidate two announcement stories with traditional and/or boring leads.

Ask: "How would you begin these stories if you wished to catch the attention of an editor?" Or, "Write a feature-type lead to these stories." Look for an imaginative lead, preferably with a topical angle.

- *Understanding public appeal.* Everyone in the news service/publicity business has been asked to write a release about a book written by a faculty member on an obscure or esoteric subject. It is our job to give these books a popular angle.

George Dehne is president of Dehne, Schitzer, and Miles, a marketing research and consulting firm in Waltham, Massachusetts.

Select an actual or imaginary book on a reasonably obscure topic. (We used a sociologist's book on monasteries.) Ask the candidate: "You have not seen the book, but you are asked to interview the author. What are some of the questions you might explore with the professor that could conceivably make this interview appeal to the public?"

Look for questions that might be asked by the average newspaper reader. (In the case of this sociologist, we looked for questions such as "What is the modern day equivalent of a monastery?" "Who joins monasteries today?" and so forth. We came up with about 10 questions.)

- *Finding news sources.* Identifying reliable sources of news or feature articles is essential. Ask the candidate (who I assume at least attended college): "Whom would you ask or where would you look for story possibilities on this campus?"

The experienced or imaginative candidate should suggest: the academic dean, the dean of students, academic department heads, the dean of the professional school, the grant administrator, or an especially well-known faculty member. The candidate should also suggest continually reviewing the course catalog (for topical courses), the list of faculty publications, the faculty and staff newsletter, the student newspaper, and the bulletin boards. Candidates who have no idea where to look or those who expect stories to come to them are not aggressive enough.

- *Confidence.* No matter how sound the news judgment or how imaginative the answers to the earlier questions, the candidate must market or sell a story idea to the media to succeed. Testing for confidence is imperfect, but you can make a stab at it.

Check the local daily newspaper and pick out the top story of the week. Ask the candidate: "If our college had the foremost expert in the nation on 'X' subject (the major story), whom would you contact in the media and how would you do it?"

The candidate who says he or she would call the TV networks, the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, the Associated Press, and so forth is the person to look for. The candidate who would write a letter to the major regional daily can look elsewhere for employment.

While far from perfect, the "aptitude test" should prove valuable, when used in conjunction with interviews and a review of references and writing samples, in identifying the right person for your news operation.

But Can They Write?

Penn State's test of PR job applicants shows most are weak in newswriting

by Arthur V. Ciervo and Roger L. Williams

The candidate's credentials are perfect. A bachelor's degree in English from a prestigious university and a master's degree in journalism. Six years of experience on a major metro daily, including a statewide award for reporting. His clips? Also first-rate.

How long has he been working on the writing test? Three-and-a-half hours? Here he comes. Let's take a look. Uh-oh, he botched the lead. Look at these spelling errors. He doesn't work a quote in until the fifth graph. He did so well in everything else; I thought surely he was the ideal candidate.

This sequence isn't at all unusual at the department of public information at Pennsylvania State University.

Since 1976, no one has been hired without taking our writing test. The test consists of writing a 750-word news feature story based on an interview conducted with three faculty members and a penologist. The subject: whether juvenile delinquency can be curbed. The transcript of the round table interview winds on for 19 pages, combining four trains of thought that are not always in agreement.

We give candidates the transcript; put them in a room with a typewriter, paper, and pencils; and tell them to write the story for their local newspaper. We also tell them the test will be graded for speed, accuracy, and style.

Evidence from 111 writing tests we've administered suggests that many experienced writers, for whatever reasons, have not mastered the art of news and feature writing.

Of the 258 grades given to 111 test takers by managers on our staff, 100 (39 percent) were C-minus or lower. In this case, lower includes 45 D's and eight F's. Grades weren't much better on the other end of the scale. We awarded five A's, seven B-pluses, 22 B's, 22 B-minuses, and 34 C-pluses. The most frequent score was C, which occurred 68 times (more than one-fourth of the total).

A passing grade for writer/editor positions is a C, while a candidate for manager of the news bureau must score a B. Successful candidates, however, generally do better.

These results are surprising, if not shocking, because we're not testing beginning writers. We generally receive 200 to 300 applications for a writer/editor opening in our office, and we screen carefully on the basis of experience and the quality of submitted writing samples. From this pool, we may select five or six candidates for interviews and testing. Admittedly, though, the writing test is not easy.

What were the common mistakes made by these experienced writers?

1. *Poorly written leads.* As any good writer knows, leads should be short (18 to 28 words), to the point, and compelling. If readers don't like the lead, they probably won't bother with the rest of the story. However, many of our test takers wrote leads that were

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Arthur V. Ciervo is president of Arthur Ciervo & Associates, in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. Ciervo was formerly director of public information and relations at Pennsylvania State University. Roger L. Williams is executive director of university relations at Penn State.

long and rambling. (See sidebar.)

2. *Poor transitions.* Some writers constructed a good lead but, in their second graph, built a brick wall for their readers by listing panel members or information not related to the first paragraph. Stories characterized by poor transitions generally lacked focus and lurched from point to point.

3. *Lack of focus.* Many of the applicants tried to say too much in too little space, and the result was an unfocused, wandering narrative.

We look for a test taker to thread the needle—to single out one or two themes from the interview and zero in on them. Instead, many writers feel compelled to use the kitchen-sink approach. They throw in a variety of comments from all four interviewees, without regard to theme, transitions, or whether some of the interviewees said anything worth printing.

Often, those writers who produced a long, vague, tortuous lead devoted their second paragraph to an introduction of the participants and their titles, further bogging things down. The first two paragraphs, then, generally consumed the reader with an assortment of names and opinions, evidently for fear of leaving someone out.

A writer's task is to bring order out of chaos—not to perpetuate it. However, many of our test takers failed miserably on this score.

4. *Poor use of quotes.* For years, the Associated Press has taught its reporters to use quotes high up in the story, in either the second or third paragraph. Doing so helps bring the reader further into the copy. Some applicants used quotes sparingly or indirectly. In several cases, quotes did not appear until the second page.

5. *Lack of speed.* In busy public relations operations, fast writing is a must. Thus, the writer's speed in completing the test is a big consideration in our grading. Generally, the most qualified writers finish the test in one hour and 45 minutes to two hours and 15 minutes.

The average speed for the 111 tests was two hours and 57 minutes. The speed record is one hour and 10 minutes, with the longest being six and a half hours. After test takers pass the three-hour mark, they've generally eliminated themselves from further consideration, regardless of the quality of their writing.

6. *Dull writing.* Lively writing consists of many ingredients, including good quotes; action-packed words; anecdotes; sentence variety; and short words and sentences. In all too many cases, sentences and paragraphs were long and winding, such as:

"Organizing efforts in demanding that incarcerated juvenile offenders be kept apart from adult offenders was an effective means of initiating community based programs to help youth, Katkin noted, citing a Harrisburg-area project in which he was involved."

"Putting juvenile offenders in an institution could lead to the distinct possibility of them again being institutionalized as adults."

The grader on this particular test commented: "The writing has a feeling of indirectness. It is as if he isn't choosing the right words to say exactly what he means."

Here are some instructive comments from graders on other stories:

"Nobody should use words like 'ancillary' in a news story, except in a quote. When he does, it ought to be spelled correctly."

"The article is overwritten and poorly organized. She hit all the important points but just didn't weed out those that are less important."

"She does the opposite of what most people do with this test. Instead of trying to say too much in the space that she has, she says too little."

"I was surprised to see the 'I think' in the last paragraph. I can't believe that anyone who has been a reporter for 13 years would use that subjective a phrase in a news story."

"This story spends too much time talking about location, program, and participants before getting to the heart of the issue. In fact, he doesn't get to the lead until the last few pages."

"Eight misspelled words."

"In four and a half hours, the candidate wrote only five paragraphs."

"This is not a news story; it's an editorial. She fails to make it clear in several places whether the opinions expressed are hers or those of the profs. And she didn't mention Penn State."

"This story has no flow to it. It leaves you wondering what the point really is."

"He tends to use three or four unnecessary words in most sentences, so that his phrasing always seems too long and awkward."

"Writer should make sentences shorter and more to the point."

"Uses a lot of passive voice. For example: 'Although problems with juvenile institutions, foster homes, and schools were discussed at length, it was almost uniformly agreed upon that . . . . ' "

Taking the test did bring out a sense of humor in some people.

One candidate added this note to his test: "I will understand if some stupid mistakes contained in the writing prevents me from being graded highly on this, I just hope that you, the reader, think that I am not an idiot."

Another candidate, who apparently felt the pressure, wrote: "Quite simply, Mr. Ciervo, today I suffered from writer's block."

And: "Dear Mr. Ciervo: I'm afraid I was overcome by the heat, and my brains were scrambled."

Regardless of what candidates thought about the writing exercise or how they reacted to it, the test has proved to be a surprisingly accurate measurement of a person's writing ability. On numerous occasions, writing test results were not as good as the clippings submitted.

In one instance, for example, we followed an education writer's articles for two years in a daily newspaper and then brought her in as a candidate. Her test results indicated that she did not write strong leads and had some minor grammar problems. When asked about these faults during a reference check, her city editor responded, "We have a very good copy desk."

Some writers were solid on accuracy and style but too slow for a busy operation. We hired three such persons, who averaged about three hours on the test, and worked with them to pick up speed. No one apparently had ever encouraged or challenged them to write faster.

The writing evaluation is the greatest of levelers. It can also compensate. Many good writers, we have found, are not the best talkers. These people may not endear themselves to us in the interviews, but they do when we see their tests.

The test is not everything, of course. We sometimes hire a writer/editor who, although scoring a C, has shown other desirable qualities such as initiative and enthusiasm. The test, in this case, reveals weaknesses we will work with the person to correct.

Our writing tests can be given over long distance as well. We've had candidates take the tests in colleagues' offices in Maryland, South Dakota, New York, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. Copies are then sent to Penn State for grading. If the applicants don't do well, we save the expense of flying them in for interviews.

To imagine the composition of our office without a testing policy is chilling. Our anecdotal evidence, however, tells us that most college PR departments don't administer writing tests.

The Penn State news bureau has been rated in the top 10 for excellence in news writing for five of the past six years in CASE competitions. And, in 1980, we won *Newsweek* magazine's grand award for newswriting excellence. In the final analysis, we think that our test, used as an important consideration in the hiring process, has proved very effective in helping us maintain high standards for our work.

The Best of the Worst

Here are some examples of poorly written leads and what the graders had to say about them:

- "A more comprehensive approach to youth social service is needed if this nation's juvenile delinquency troubles are to be solved, a group of educators concluded. Social services for youth should develop better ways of weeding out truly dangerous youngsters from merely delinquent ones, and better support systems for less harmful children with behavior problems, they said."
- "In answer to the question of whether our juvenile justice system, as it now exists, is more harmful than helpful, one noted PSU professor concludes that there is little evidence to support the conclusion that those juvenile offenders who are institutionalized are, in fact, any more dangerous or disturbed than their friends or schoolmates who remain outside the community."
- "Has an increased emphasis on convenience and disposables in contemporary society resulted in a gap in the delivery system of juvenile justice? According to a panel discussion among four social scientists from Pennsylvania State University on the juvenile justice system this may be true."

Besides being too long (the first two leads are 56 and 60 words, respectively), these leads are weak and vague. Many of our test takers make a fatal strategic mistake when they write a lead that tries to summarize the transcript and, as a result, says little at all.

These are typical comments from our graders on leads:

- "For me, this test died during the first four words in the lead ('A more comprehensive approach'). Chunky, dull, turgid writing."
- "Weak lead, with an academic tone to it."
- "This writer used a question lead ('Is our current juvenile justice system helpful or harmful in its treatment of juvenile offenders?'), which is intellectually lazy. You avoid drawing a conclusion about the material."
- "Applicant started off poorly with three straight questions in the lead."
- "The lead has too many different thoughts in it."
- "As far as I am concerned, she flunked in her lead. She misspelled delinquency and used 'illusive' for 'elusive.' I'm not looking for a perfect speller, but someone who makes that many serious mistakes in a lead sounds like trouble."

Here are two leads that are focused and succinct. The reader doesn't have to pore over them a dozen times to extract the meaning:

- "Saying no to a child is one of the best ways to control juvenile delinquency—and eventually adult crime. But many adults, including parents, have relinquished that responsibility in recent years."
- "Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system may be doing more harm than good, according to a team of Pennsylvania State University professors."

Leads of this caliber were rare, however. We're continually amazed that so many candidates with impressive credentials in journalism and college public relations have trouble writing leads. Perhaps these writers have never had the advantage of working under a good editor. Or perhaps good editors throw their energy into editing, rather than into teaching their reporters how to write better.—AVC and RLW

Big Coverage from Small Shops

by Sy Friedman

Did you hear about the college public relations representative who walked into the city room of a major newspaper and carefully explained his carefully typed news release to the night editor?

The editor listened and thanked him. The college PR person left, only to return moments later to add one more sentence.

Unabashed, the editor walked over to the waste basket, picked up the rumpled paper, and smoothed it out.

What went wrong?

- The release didn't "grab" the editor;
- it was written poorly;
- the editor had too many stories and too little space;
- the editor's alma mater had lost last week's football game to the college you represent;
- a marital spat took place before the editor left for work; or
- all of the above.

Most likely, the news release wasn't newsworthy in the editor's eyes. But you can explain—you're busy and it's hard to comb the campus for story ideas. And how many headline events take place at your college anyway?

How then can you find and write an attention-getting story about your college that the media will use and come back asking for more? And how can you be productive if you happen to be a one- or two-person PR shop saddled with routine, time-consuming extra duties and hampered by a tight budget?

For one thing, develop campus news sources by getting to know as many people as possible. Start with students, counselors, janitors, security guards, department chairs, the registrar, the librarian, the president, the lab assistant who cleans test tubes, the night cleaning person, and the part-time instructor. In other words, cultivate anyone who can provide a news tip.

One part-time instructor at the City Colleges of Chicago where I work informed me about a nun who appeared in his Saturday morning adult education radio-TV repair class "so that she could learn a trade when she retired." The result was a feature story and photo layout on "Meet Sister Fix-it," carried by media throughout the United States and Canada, and in Ireland.

Another suggestion is to keep your eyes open. For example, a campus news officer saw a woman student being followed across campus by a duck. The story went something like this: "There was this girl. There was this duck. The duck was following the girl. The duck thought the girl was its mother. The reason: imprinting." The story was used by The *New York Times*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*, among other publications, and provided ample footage for television cameras.

One way to serve the electronic media is to provide "beepers" via phone on fast-breaking news as well as routine events on campus. Radio stations are grateful for the "actuality."

Another way to keep the electronic media interested is to offer assignment editors money-saving "TwoFers," two stories for the price of one. The theory is that a TV crew can shoot a second story while on campus if you have a second item as newsworthy as the first.

For example, suppose you have informed the TV assignment editor that older adults have snared the Lieutenant Governor for a 1 p.m. discussion on financial help to the elderly. Fine, says the assignment editor, and prepares to send a TV crew. By the way, you point out, at 2 p.m. Korean and Vietnamese students, old as well as young, will be in a classroom down the hall from the first event. The cameras can catch 'em learning English as a second language, as they prepare to become American citizens. The result is a "TwoFer" for a grateful TV assignment editor who is likely to respond the next time you call with a similar package.

The same instructor who helped teach a nun how to fix radio and television sets can come in handy when a newspaper needs an authority to help expose TV repair shops that may be gyping the public. Because of your reliability, the city desk asks you to recommend someone from your faculty. You suggest your available radio-TV instructor. The newspaper exposes the "bad guys." The result is a week-long front page series in the *Chicago Daily News* with the instructor and the college getting pats on the back.

Speech and debate instructors were in demand during the Ford-Carter TV debates preceding the 1976 presidential election. The *Chicago Sun-Times* asked for and received a critique of the initial debate from a faculty member at our college. The paper, jammed with national coverage of the event, provided space for local analysis by the teacher. The editor thanked the teacher and the City Colleges of Chicago for cooperating.

Unusual items are always noteworthy. For example, there are the 75-year-old art student who is graduating after attending classes for the past 15 years, the retired grocery store employee who is realizing his dream by going to college for the first time at age 65, and the auto accident victim confined to a bed for two years who started college in her bedroom. The latter became a captive viewer of TV College classes offered by the City Colleges of Chicago after her daughter turned on the educational television station one day. By the time the mother became mobile again, she had completed requirements for the Associate in Arts degree. She went on to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree and today teaches elementary classes. She is one of the 100,000 persons who have taken TV College courses in the past 20 years. Her story hit every paper in town.

Even a typing class can be newsworthy. One evening an instructor planned a ceremony to issue certificates of completion to handicapped persons who had learned to type using fewer than 10 fingers. One young woman used the stub of one arm to shift on her electric typewriter and five fingers

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on her other arm to type. The story stirred a state legislator to sponsor a bill providing $125,000 to continue the program—just as funds were running low.

When a Chicago city health ordinance set guidelines for restaurant owners and operators to provide clean establishments, the City Colleges of Chicago established food service sanitation classes to fill the need. Instruction was not only in English but also in Greek, French, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese. The story was used by ethnic newspapers as well as other media.

Radio and TV crews need student reaction to national and international events. When news such as the death of China's Mao Tse-Tung breaks, the nearby college is the place for cameras and mikes. Making students and staff available within minutes is part of the service the one- or two-person PR staff can provide.

While you may be limited in staff and budget, you can get your message across to the public through a weekly public affairs radio program. It gives you an opportunity to update a story you have developed earlier or to amplify an item that had to be confined because of space limitations. To save time, you can schedule three half-hour taping sessions in about two hours.

Radio station WJJD in Chicago carries our programs year-round on Saturday mornings. Any faculty member, student, administrator, or staff member is fair game. They include the security officer who discusses behind-the-scenes activities on campus, the librarian who is developing a new system to keep books from walking out the front door, and the registrar who is ready to "give up" each week prior to the start of a new semester. Senior citizens are eager to tell about their interests, especially practicing better health habits for longer life.

Photos help get the message across to print media. We supplied pictures in a report about our TV College and gave permission to use text to The *Chronicle of Higher Education*, which presented a boiled-down version of a 64-page publication. Dailies as well as weeklies use photos of new hires and those who receive promotions. We keep color slides of the campuses and the people in them filed and ready for TV demands. We routinely shoot photographs for catalog, brochure, and promotional uses when we visit the nine campuses of the City Colleges of Chicago. The photo file becomes a resource for local newspapers and other publications. One time a stock shot of students dancing together in a gym class was used by *People* magazine to illustrate the return of ballroom dancing. The grateful New York editor returned the photo with a warm thank-you.

Budgetary problems hit the one- and two-person PR shop even harder than larger staffs. To make do, you offer more TV "TwoFers" for double exposure. With few exceptions, you hold every release to one page. You mail less frequently and stuff four releases in one envelope to cut postage. It results in sharper writing and editing, and makes you welcome at any city desk.

In short, work hard to develop a story, write it tight, but let it sell itself.

Accordingly, you avoid walking into the city room and telling the night city editor what a great release you have written. He or she will know, and so will you.

How to Get Coverage Without Releases

by George B. Eager

Most of us recognize the demise of the news release. Several years ago many of us began to wonder if we were losing our touch. We had practiced our profession in an era when the news release was the mainstay. If one wrote well—and of course we all wrote impeccably—there was no question about whether the story would appear in local papers. There was an excellent chance it would appear in regional media enough times each year to keep your and your management's morale up. You could see your material in the national media as well.

Sometime in the early '60s our batting average slumped. Perhaps the most important reason was the increase in the size and the quality of the competition. By then, hundreds of college and university presidents had seen the light about the value of public relations. Institutional PR officers suddenly proliferated, and of course they all had important messages to convey to education, science, and cultural affairs editors throughout their states and beyond.

In the spring of 1975, I visited Peter Janssen, then education editor of *Time*. I happened to be there just as he began looking at the releases from that day's mail. The stack, neatly piled up by a secretary, was about 15 inches high, and by Peter's own estimate contained 400 or so news releases. Naturally I asked, "Do you read them?" and he said, "Impossible. I would have time for nothing else." He explained that in many cases he knew by looking at the news release letterhead that he could discard certain stories. Then he pulled one off the top, looked at it for a minute, and said, "Would you believe—continuing education at Hackensack?" Peter said he would read the lead paragraph of others before tossing them out, and only very few would he retain, perhaps for a round-up story of some kind, and a few others he would actually follow up with a phone call.

What happens at *Time* also happens on a smaller scale at *Greensboro Daily News*, *Philadelphia Bulletin*, and *Charlottesville Daily Progress*. So one of the answers to why you want to get coverage without news releases is that, if you want coverage, you had better think about alternatives—before your management begins thinking about them.

Let's not abandon the news release altogether. It still has some great uses which would be difficult if not impos-

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George B. Eager is director of communications at Princeton University.

sible to achieve by any other means. In particular, I think of the obituary of a faculty star with distinguished credits running three pages, or the annual statistics on admissions, or who is to get your institution's honorary degrees. Things like that still need to be done by news releases.

But let's look now at some alternatives. Now most of these have as their underpinnings a thorough knowledge by you, the practitioner, of the media and the media people, who are the object of your affection. One must read extensively, with great care. One must politely but purposefully interrogate media people and others who know them. And one must have a good system for recording important intelligence so it's at your fingertips when the phone rings or when the mail is opened. I'm still pretty old-fashioned about these matters, but for a low budget operation like mine, the index card file is the best way I've found to keep such information.

Here are some ways I've used to get coverage without releases. Not all of these items are applicable to all institutions. It depends on the size of your institution and the kinds of activities going on there.

At the top of my list are the telephone and the letter. These are marvelous devices for trying out the idea, for issuing the invitation, for offering the congratulations, for sending the clipping, for marking the excerpts, for sharing the humor, for offering the exclusive, and for giving the date and the hour of an event at which you would like a news media person to be present.

The second category I have called "hit the road." I think it's very important to "show the flag," as we call it, regularly in the editorial offices of newspapers and magazines and in the offices of news directors at radio and television stations. Our strategy at Princeton is not to go there to sell specific ideas but to establish and maintain rapport with those people. Then you will be adequately informed so that you will begin to get questions from them about trends—about admissions, university policy on gay people, or any number of things. Very often we find that that last man or woman in to see the media person is the first one who's going to get called. If I've been by the *Washington Post* within the last couple of weeks, and suddenly the guy at the *Post* has a question he wants to ask somebody, he thinks, "Well, maybe George has got a professor up there who could give me a slant on this."

The third category I call "a not-so-social media visits program." Take a look at what's going on on your campus, whether it's a concert, a play, or a lecture, the dedication of a building, or an athletic event. Can you build around that event an opportunity to mix a small number of your favorite media people with a few faculty people whose interests parallel the editor's interest? We systematically invite a group of editors and their spouses to Princeton home football games, and this has had an amazing impact. We had one game at which we concentrated on the science editors. We had the science people down, and we got some of the top Princeton energy scientists, transportation people, and so on. Before the game, we gave them Bloody Marys and sandwiches. Before and after the game we had a chance to mix these people up with faculty and with some of our student leaders who are also of considerable interest to the media. Chances are that, the next time one of those science editors is working on a fusion energy story, he or she is going to remember having met the person who runs the Plasma Physics Laboratory at Princeton.

Learn to adapt your invitations to the interests of the media people. I kept asking the wire service bureau chief from Trenton to football games, and he kept saying, "Oh thanks, I can't come that day." Finally he said, "Look, I don't like football. I'm a hockey fan." I wrote that down in my little intelligence file, and, when the first game of the hockey season rolled around, I called this guy up and said, "How would you like to go to the hockey game?" And he said, "Great." He came up, and I got him together with some people at the university.

The fourth category I suggest is that you study your publications and keep very good lists of media people to whom you're sending them. We have an internal tabloid, the *Princeton Weekly Bulletin*. I'm sure a lot of you have something like this. This paper started out rather modestly in 1975, and we soon put about 300 editors and free-lance writers on the mailing list. We print in each issue permission for media people to take anything from it that they like. The results have been amazing. We've had stories in the *New York Times* written right off the *Princeton Weekly Bulletin*. The reporters may call up the subjects of the *PWB* features, get more quotes, and put new leads on, but the *Bulletin* stimulated—in the area between Boston and Richmond—at least 60 stories in its first six months.

We also have a quarterly magazine, a more substantive publication. We have a number of media people—but not as many as get the *Bulletin*—who get the magazine. We also offer permission to use material from the university magazine.

Occasionally we clip a good story from the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, photocopy it, and send that around with permission to reprint. Even the student newspaper, the *Princetonian*, occasionally comes up with an interesting, well-written feature. We clip that, get the editors' permission, and make it available.

We send a sizable number of Princeton University telephone directories to reporters and editors to use at their desks. We send about 250 copies of the listing of all faculty and staff members with their office and home addresses, so that the editors will have it right there when they want it. We send, as most of you do, the *President's Report* to a lot of media people. We have an *Annual Institutional Data Summary* with brief statistics for a given academic year. Published at the end of September, it has a breakdown of male/female, minority groups, and so on. We send that to a lot of people.

Let's discuss excerpts for a minute. If you have an articulate president, you will want to send his or her speeches, with the key passages marked, to "Notable and Quotable" of the *Wall Street Journal*. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* uses essays on its back page. Even CURRENTS occasionally will use a quote. All of this comes back to the business of knowing your media. You should constantly have in mind nearby newspapers, radio stations, talk shows, discussion programs on television, or whatever—places where you might direct some of the wise comments by your president or other officer of your institution.

Another way to get coverage without releases is what we call at Princeton the feature digest. It consists of two, sometimes three, legal-length pages. It's made up of one-paragraph summaries of feature ideas, which we put out on the 15th of each month. These are the kinds of things that Pete Janssen *will* read. He doesn't have time to read a long news release, but when he can see one idea per paragraph, he's interested. The feature digest has had amazing success. It goes to magazine people who would never use a news release as written. It goes to producers of documentary television and radio programs. It goes to a lot of free-lance writers.

Another thing that we produce we call radio shorts. These are timed spots, and they range all the way from historical things to the latest developments in environmental studies, urban housing, whatever.

We're planning a faculty resource guide. This publication lists professors and administrators who are available to the media to answer questions in their particular area of expertise. You must start out by getting your faculty's cooperation. Don't just automatically put your faculty stars on a list like this because it means they are going to have to answer some phone calls at some point. They must be willing to help.

The radio voicer or actuality is a good device, particularly for your local radio stations. If you have something that's about to break and you've got all the facts together, give your local radio station a break. Call up the stations—they all have recording devices. You do have to adjust your copy because it's going to go on the air. You can't just read a release written for print.

If you have a film, especially a good one, try to get all the TV stations within reasonable distance of your institution to videotape it. If they transfer your film to tape, they can keep it on the shelf until one of these days they're desperately searching to fill out a half-hour slot or a 15-minute slot. If they've got your film on tape, they're likely to use it.

Don't forget the picture-with-caption possibility. It's still very popular with most newspapers. We're in the midst now of encouraging student photographers—some of whom are very, very good—to bring their best stuff in and let us look at it. Occasionally, a student shows up with a marvelous picture, usually something candid and sometimes something humorous. We buy it for ten bucks, which delights the photographer. We move it out with a caption, and shortly it appears somewhere. That's much easier than writing a news release.

When you do have an on-campus press visitor, think about how you can best maximize the fact that the person's there. If you know a few days ahead that somebody is coming, call the president's office and ask, "Do you have five minutes just to say hello to so-and-so from such-and-such paper?" I wouldn't bother the president with everybody, but the president is probably willing to take a few minutes to say hello to press people who are important to you. Then the visitor feels special.

Are there any press groups in your area—state press association or state press photographers' association—for whom you could arrange an annual meeting on your campus? If you can get them there, you've got an opportunity to do some things for them and with them that might be very productive.

Another possibility is to run small briefings for special categories of press people. We are planning a series of these. We are planning to invite perhaps a dozen, or 15 at the most, of the *best* of the cultural affairs editors, the *best* people who write about urban housing or environment or energy or transportation. To do this, you've got to have faculty cooperation, but such a program can pay big dividends.

I want to give two examples of stories that have appeared without news releases. The April 26, 1976, issue of *People Magazine* carried a two-page story called "Jocks." It says, "Princeton women called her coach, the world called Betty Constable a champ at squash." It's a nice feature about Betty Constable that came right off the Princeton feature digest. In the winter of 1975, we had one of Betty Constable's stars, Emily Goodfellow, in the feature digest. We pointed out that, for the first time in Princeton history, a varsity athlete was about to win 12 varsity letters—and it was she. Ed Roberts, a Pulitzer Prize-winning former writer at the *National Observer*, called up and said, "Emily Goodfellow sounds very interesting. Can I come up tomorrow?" The result was a big spread in "Mainstreams," Ed's column.

I also believe in the advantages of press passes, whether reporters need them or not. If you can put something in their hands that identifies them as welcome persons at your institution, I think that's good.

We have also a contact card, a printed 3 by 5 card with a Princeton tab on it, that fits into editors' contact files. The card has the names and phone numbers, both office and home, of everybody on the communications staff.

We've done a lot of research on our alumni in the media. If you have alumni who are editors of papers and magazines or news directors of radio and television stations, it'll be worth some effort to find out who and where they are. We've done the same thing with our alumni in the Congress, and every one of them gets the *Princeton Weekly Bulletin* and some other things from my office. We make the same effort with key people—alumni or not—in the federal agencies with whom we do a certain amount of business.

Undoubtedly, there are even more ways to get coverage without releases. The important thing to remember is that you need to personalize your approach. Spend more time staying in touch with media people and less time at the mimeograph machine.

Taking Your Show on the Road

How a media plan fits into your PR operations

by Kathryn R. Costello

"Media plan." That sounds like a contradiction in terms. How can you plan something you can't control?

The fact is, a plan can help you make the most of opportunities that come up. Without it, you live at the mercy of events. Even the most thorough media plan can't control what happens, good or bad. But it can prepare you to manage what happens more artfully.

As in any sort of planning, you have to begin at the beginning. Start by reviewing the overall plan for your school, college, or university. This plan affirms the mission of your institution, identifies priorities, and establishes clear goals. Remember, the clearer your institution's goals, the easier it is to create a focused, comprehensive, and successful PR program. If your institution doesn't have a stated mission and list of priorities, be a catalyst to create them.

The institutional plan provides the foundation for your PR plan and, by extension, your media plan. You can't have a successful PR plan without media coverage, but you can't treat media coverage as an end in itself, either.

Begin with research

Long before you start cultivating reporters and setting up interviews, two rules will help you target your story ideas to the proper media outlets.

1. *Know your institution.* It isn't enough to read a mission statement or institutional plan. You need personal knowledge and a clear understanding of your institution's culture. For example, you must:

- Be clear on the purposes of your institution and the implications of these purposes in terms of your constituencies and, in turn, the media through which they are reached.

For example, a private, undergraduate, liberal arts college serves different constituencies than a state-supported, research-oriented university that emphasizes graduate education and research. You must understand that difference before you go off in a haphazard search for media exposure.

- Familiarize yourself with institutional goals and analyze their impact on your program. For example, let's say your college's goals include increasing the quality of its students, the size of its student body, and the amount of research support it gets. Clearly, your college needs different objectives for every goal. Your media plan should include strategies for each.
- Identify the faculty who are most notable, most articulate, and most available to talk to the media, and who work in the most relevant disciplines.
- Figure out which departments have the best faculty and strongest research. Keep in mind that you can undermine your media plan if you give disproportionate exposure to faculty and departments that others in your institution perceive as weak.
- Identify academic areas or programs that have potential in your media relations effort. Some, such as foreign studies, can be relevant to current events. Others, such as the campus day care center, may present a wealth of feature or human interest possibilities. Still others may be the spawning ground for big news that grows out of important faculty research. Your university's cancer research, for example, could fall in this last category.
- Decide which areas need special promotion based on institutional priorities. For example, if your institution's goal is to recruit more students, you would want to spotlight professors who win praise for their lively teaching style.

Once you've done an inventory of your campus culture, summarize your information into ready reference material as soon as you can. By all means, computerize! A faculty list that's cross-indexed by discipline and subject area can be a vital media relations tool.

2. *Learn the media.* A cardinal sin, in my view, is the old scatter-shot approach, in which you flood the media with your news releases. You can't make consistently good matches for your story ideas unless you have a strong feel for the newspapers, magazines, and TV and radio stations you want to deal with. At a minimum, you need to know these things about the various media:

- major audiences served;
- geographical areas served;
- purpose of the publication or broadcast (some magazines handle general news only, while some cable TV networks, such as ESPN or CNN, are highly specialized);
- the reporters, editors, and producers who work for these media, and which particular people are the best ones to contact first; and
- deadlines and requirements of each organization. Even your best idea will fall flat if it misses the deadline.

The media plan's three parts

Once you've done your basic research, you can begin to plan. A good media relations plan or program has three basic elements: a crisis plan, a "react-quickly-to-opportunity" plan, and a proactive placement plan.

1. *The crisis plan.* This is like the military and civil defense disaster plans that, in an emergency, assign all important tasks to specific individuals or departments. The crisis plan consists of a written set of standard operating procedures that establish clear lines of authority and provide a fail-safe backup system. Such a plan helps you anticipate as many "what ifs" as possible.

For example, if any sort of campus crisis ranging from a dorm fire to a sudden resignation to a murder should occur, we at Southern Methodist University have a system that details who should be called and by whom, who is the spokesperson or who takes responsibility for appointing one, and how we should handle the news about

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the event. Parts of this plan may be nothing more than a verbal understanding of procedures. In any case, thinking through the possible crises in advance at all levels gets us ready for quick action when reporters descend upon the campus.

2. *The seize-the-opportunity plan.* This plan requires immediate action. For example, if country X invades country Y, who on your faculty could become a local or national expert? Intimate knowledge of your institution, particularly the faculty, is vital here.

Again, a faculty-experts list helps. Maintaining a sense of news by reading daily newspapers and magazines and watching developing events keeps you alert for opportunities.

Work from the perspective of the journalist and what he or she needs. By building up personal relationships, you gradually get to the point where you receive the coveted "I'm doing a story on ethics in medicine; do you have anyone who could talk about that subject?" calls. The database you create about your institution and the media gives you instant access to the information you need to be a good resource. The rest is a combination of good intentions and hard work.

3. *The proactive placement plan.* This helps you get your central messages across through well-placed stories that aren't bound to current events. This part of the process looks most like a plan because the initiative comes from you.

Begin by selecting your targets. Match your institution's strengths and goals both to the stories that are possible and to the proper media outlet.

For example, perhaps there's an expert on the federal budget in a liberal arts school you'd like to promote. Find out when Congress will be debating the budget, choose media outlets that both reach your audiences and are interested in business and economics, and lay the groundwork for placing your expert and his or her story. To get maximum exposure, try to find several complementary outlets for the story. Perhaps the professor can write an op-ed piece, be interviewed on local TV news, and appear on a talk show.

Again, to achieve this kind of diverse placement, you must work closely with the professor, know the media, have a sense of what's news, and learn to find different angles for different placements. You should assign such a complicated task to a staff member (or take it on yourself) so that it remains a conscious objective.

Like the opportunity plan, the initial work you put into your proactive placement plan can pay off virtually every day of the year.

Targets and timetables

Specific objectives and a timetable will both motivate you and provide you with a yardstick. Help yourself out by writing down as much of your media plan and schedule as possible. One method is a chart that lists:

- your topic, person, story idea, or all three;
- the potential media outlets to which you'll pitch your idea;
- the timing you'd prefer; and
- the staff person responsible.

Such an organized list of stories or ideas helps your staff see the total scope of activity you're planning and lets you monitor progress easily.

In addition to identifying specific types of stories, some PR offices set numerical targets for staff members, such as 20 significant placements per staff member in six months. Numerical goals alone are not enough, of course; it's all too easy to get those placements without meeting your real objectives or getting your messages across. In other words, 75 stories on archaeology may help you increase awareness of your institution but fail to accomplish anything more than that.

A note of caution

No discussion of planning would be complete without a few caveats. Keep in mind that:

1. *The three levels of your media plan—for crises, opportunities, and proactive work—are different parts of the same continuum.* You may achieve many of your proactive goals through good crisis management and daily serendipity. In other words, if you've set your goals and objectives, you'll be ready to take advantage of events that help you meet them.

2. *Good plans are flexible.* It's tempting to see your paper plan as an end in itself. But don't. Think of your plan as a fluid document, subject to review and modification. This is equally true about your total program plan.

When you're reviewing your plan, involve all staff members responsible for carrying it out. One way to do this is through weekly or biweekly staff reports. These can include clippings and staff critiques on progress and results. Frequent reports permit regular, minor changes and offer you a chance to give praise and constructive criticism throughout the process.

3. *A plan is only a tool.* It should never take on a life of its own. Use it to gain results, not just to say, "We fulfilled the requirements of the plan."

4. *Everything you do must fit together.* For example, if the major focus of your fall PR plan is on engineering research, then coordinate your media plan, alumni publication, newsletters, PSAs, and other programs to feature engineering faculty, research, or student profiles. This helps you get repeated exposure to multiple audiences for the same or similar messages. And it's a good way to ensure that your audiences hear and understand these messages.

No matter how exciting it is when your stories show up in print and go out over the airwaves, they become true successes only when they do what you planned.

Eight Steps to a PR Plan

Follow these directions to develop a strategic communications plan that works

by Larry Lauer

Most campus public relations plans boil down to a laundry list of goals and objectives that improve day-to-day activities. This is fine, but these days it's not enough.

To help your institution advance—or even survive—you need to assert your role in developing special institutional projects and strategies. All of these should put forth a central message, linked by several themes. This, of course, is what strategic communications planning is all about.

How to begin

Before you develop the message you want to advance or the themes that will tie your projects together, you must clarify your institutional mission. Everything else you do will depend on how well you carry out this task.

Start by conducting an audit to define your campus culture. Get help by reading Terrence E. Deal's book, *Corporate Cultures: The Rites and Rituals of Corporate Life.* (It's available from Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Reading, MA 01867. The prepaid price, $9.57, includes shipping.)

You'll identify your institution's shared values and beliefs, heroes and heroines, rituals and ceremonies, and folklore. From this raw material, you can see whether your mission is on target or off base.

At Texas Christian University we used the focus group technique with faculty, students, and staff to find out what they thought was our mission. Then we followed up by conducting in-depth interviews with selected internal opinion leaders. The most significant thing we learned was that our people lacked a shared perception of our mission.

When the current TCU chancellor arrived, I met with a group of university leaders one Saturday morning to identify critical issues that the institution needed to address. We quickly agreed that TCU's mission statement needed a rewrite.

We invited a representative group of TCU administrators and the faculty senate to attend another Saturday morning meeting to identify critical issues. This meeting confirmed our previous finding that we should rewrite our mission statement. We then asked each major segment of the university to organize a committee to submit drafts for the chancellor's consideration.

For several months, groups in each school and college, the student affairs division, the student house of representatives, and others went to work. This process helped unify us in an important project. The chancellor wrote a final draft based on the response and circulated it for reactions.

The new mission statement, which appears in our catalog, is too long to publish here verbatim. What's important about it is that our campus community became unified in the process of developing it and that our PR staff had a document from which to write a central message and themes. These would eventually establish a clearly perceived direction for the institution.

Eight steps to a plan

Once you have a mission statement in place, you're ready to start planning. Here's what to do.

1. *Write a central message and identify themes.* These should go into all official communications and tie in with the mission statement.

Our central message that first year was "TCU is a major teaching and research university with the personalized atmosphere of a smaller college." Our themes were:

- TCU is the right size: large enough to be a major university, yet small enough to help individuals succeed.
- The emphasis on research at TCU provides an atmosphere of discovery that benefits undergraduate as well as graduate students.
- Our location, one of the most exciting in the country, provides many internship and career opportunities.
- Our orientation toward helping individual students continues for a lifetime through our family-oriented alumni activities.
- Our church relationship stresses a concern for values, ethics, and the study of religion, but it does not advance a particular point of view.

2. *Audit your fliers and other communications.* Be sure they reflect the central message. This should do a lot to get everyone headed in the same direction. Too often in our campus communications, we send out messages that contradict rather than reinforce one another. Communication research has shown that a clear message that's repeated and reinforced is most effective.

At TCU, we completely redesigned our admissions package to communicate our central message and themes. The package includes everything from the freshman admissions catalog to the letters the dean of admissions sends out. Over a period of two years, we even revised the fliers for each academic department.

3. *Write concept papers that define selected programs and projects.* Concept papers bring people together and ensure that everyone involved in a project is headed in the same direction. The papers focus on a project's purpose and demonstrate how that purpose ties in with the already-established central PR message.

For example, at TCU the business school dean, a faculty committee, the academic vice chancellor, and I developed a paper titled "The M.J. Neeley School of Business: A Blueprint for Advancement." In this paper we defined the school's purpose as "to teach men and women to manage in a climate of changing technology." The paper also identified areas to strengthen and new ones to develop—in this case, management communication and applied research.

Our work on this paper set the stage

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for a development plan that would establish an American Enterprise Center for continuing education and applied research. It also spurred us to propose expanding facilities to provide the "climate of changing technology" called for in the school's purpose statement.

4. *Promote current campus strengths and star performers.* Ask yourself: What campus programs are most popular with the community and the general public?

Let's say your central message is that you're a regional research institution that seeks to serve the public. Then your annual health fair should get lots of attention. You should also make certain to spotlight the research professor on your campus who sets up a community rehabilitation clinic for drug users.

This kind of targeted exposure for strengths and stars says that your top campus managers encourage excellence. Not only does the public get this message, but the campus internal audience gets it, too. There is no better tactic for improving morale.

At TCU, we promote stars by taking them on the road to meet alumni, friends, and prospective students. For several years our Meet the Professor program served this purpose. This year we've begun a new program called TCU Town Hall. Initially, we are taking the vice chancellor for academic affairs, vice chancellor for student affairs, and the athletic director to selected cities. They report on progress in their areas, give their thoughts on what the future might hold, answer questions, and listen to the audiences' ideas.

So far the panel has dealt with questions about our football coach's recent decision to dismiss several players because they were taking money from alumni, the possibility of adding an engineering program, what the students of the '80s are really like, and what will happen to admissions standards in light of recent enrollment successes. If the Town Hall succeeds this year, we plan to expand the topics and issues and feature deans, project directors, and star faculty members.

Of course, we write about the programs in our campus periodicals and seek media coverage in each city where we sponsor a Town Hall.

5. *Identify crisis issues and develop an emergency plan.* An unanticipated crisis that generates bad press can contradict your central message and sabotage all your careful planning. Think about it. How would your institution react if:

- after an inspection, the health department closed your cafeteria;
- a corpse was found on your campus;
- students picketed the president's office because the campus has not divested stock in corporations that do business with South Africa;
- a professor revealed he was suffering from AIDS; or
- animal rights advocates protested research being conducted in your psychology department?

Make certain you know where your institution stands on sensitive national issues and be ready to act quickly and in character. Better yet, confront issues head-on. This lets you convert them into an opportunity to reinforce your institutional image.

6. *Plan executive speeches for important audiences.* Again, make sure your leader's speeches tie in with your central message and themes.

For example, your CEO may decide that he or she could reinforce your institution's central message by speaking out on a public policy issue. Let's say the issue is the implications of tax reform. You would write speeches, develop fliers, set up meetings, hold lectures on the issue, and so on. Handling this well reinforces the perception that your institution is active in and concerned about its community.

7. *Plan direct contact with opinion leaders.* We know from research that the biggest shortcoming of most communication is lack of feedback and opportunity to clear up misunderstanding. Because it's difficult to use mass media or even direct mail with precision, half of what we mean to communicate is misunderstood. Only when communication is face to face, when we can repeat the message in light of feedback, can we approach success.

TCU's most effective face-to-face communication program has been its 1990s Project, a commission set up to consider the university's future. When we began this in the Fall of 1983, our objective was to identify opinion leaders most likely to help shape the future of the institution. Then we tried to involve them more closely.

We invited 130 people to serve on four committees over a seven-month period. The committees were: education programs; admissions, financial aid, and student life; fiscal and physical resources; and athletics. The entire TCU board of trustees served on the commission, and four trustees chaired the committees. In addition, we mixed in friends of the university and active alumni with leaders from education, government, the arts, business, the professions, and the media.

The participants' suggestions were helpful, not threatening. And in the end, everyone felt closer to the institution. Earlier fears that commission members would dictate institutional policy were groundless. Instead, the institution ended up with a group of important people whose word-of-mouth support has been of immeasurable value. And, no doubt, their tangible support will follow.

Another tactic to reach opinion leaders one-to-one is to conduct in-person attitude surveys. Or you might train a group of people to call on individual opinion leaders to discuss issues and tell of future institutional plans. Another possibility is to bring these opinion leaders together for a conference or campus visit. Whatever you do, your ultimate purpose should be to communicate your central message and to motivate word-of-mouth support.

Once you've identified these leaders, you can develop special "insider" newsletters, invitations to social occasions, and other contacts. In other words, all your institution's executives should focus special attention on this influential group.

8. *Create "image-positioning" special events.* The right event will bring attention to your institution, communicate its style, and provide you with another chance to reinforce the central message.

For example, at TCU the perception that we're a major university was reinforced two years ago by a visit from Vice President George Bush the day after the terrorist attack on the American Marines in Lebanon. In 1985, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger accepted an invitation to participate in a symposium on U.S./Soviet relations that was held a few days before the beginning of the November summit talks in Geneva.

No more reaction planning

Following these steps in strategic communications planning puts your institution in the driver's seat. Instead of letting events determine what happens, campus leaders can formulate a plan that helps shape the future.

As a public relations professional, you can play a major role in the success of your institution's plan. It's an opportunity you shouldn't miss.

Taking the Broad View

Using your institution's strategic plan as a road map for PR

by Susan Bonnett

Several years ago, a better name for the University of Miami's Office of Public Affairs might have been the University Fire Department. Crisis management consumed our days and always seemed to keep us from any close examination of our hazy long-term goal of "promoting and advancing the University of Miami."

Our PR planning has come a long way since then. Today, we are meeting specific objectives in coordination with other university departments. Indeed, the Office of Public Affairs now enjoys new status as a team player in advancing our institution—thanks to one of the business world's modern management techniques.

In 1984, our new president, Edward T. Foote II, introduced strategic planning. He organized a long-range planning committee made up of himself, senior officers, deans, and me. Together, we hammered out a new mission statement and long-term goals. Those goals included:

- stabilizing undergraduate enrollment while enrolling students of higher academic ability,
- expanding graduate enrollment,
- improving the quality of the curriculum and instruction,
- increasing the quality and quantity of research,
- attracting and retaining the best faculty, and
- increasing private funding.

We in public affairs selected two of those goals as the basis for a new PR strategy: to draw more and better students from the Southeast and to raise more money through a capital campaign. This brought our advancement efforts clearly into focus. Now we had both a starting point for divisional planning and standards for evaluating our effectiveness.

How the PR office benefits

But how do strategic and PR planning work together? Probably the best way to explain is to outline exactly what strategic planning accomplishes. Briefly, strategic planning:

- *Defines the university's mission.* A clear mission statement enables you to set broad PR goals based upon where the institution is headed.
- *Scans the environment and identifies challenges and opportunities for the university.* This assessment tells you where PR efforts are needed. For example, if your institution is largely dependent upon state funding and the legislature is considering cuts, an aggressive legislative program should be a top priority.
- *Assesses your institution's strengths and weaknesses.* This tells you what areas have the most potential for promotion. For example, the University of Miami is unusual in that it has all of the advantages of a major research institution (top faculty, research opportunities for students, and a broad range of programs including graduate study) combined with some of the advantages of smaller institutions (low student/faculty ratio, small classes, and personal attention). We promote these facts in all of our student recruitment materials.
- *Sets priorities.* These critical elements can help you determine how to allocate limited resources and staff time. Your office's most valuable contributions will be those that support your institution's highest priorities. For example, we've been able to purchase video equipment and outside production services to produce videotape

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programs for the admissions and development offices. These new expenditures won approval because they're so clearly related to achieving the institution's goals.

- *Outlines strategies for achieving goals.* Specific program strategies provide a road map that shows you where your PR plan should be headed.

If a university wants to develop a leading research specialty, for example, it might start by recruiting top scholars and raising funds to build a research facility. This plan tells you what to promote. The PR strategy might include spotlighting faculty by helping them place op-ed articles in newspapers or offering them as expert sources for media interviews.

More rewards

When strategic and PR planning work together, our staff members see how their work fits into the big picture. This not only makes our efforts more meaningful, but it keeps us from losing sight of why we do what we do or confusing means with ends. A video production may have state-of-the-art special effects and superb original music. But if it doesn't achieve the desired change in audience awareness or behavior, we haven't done our job.

Keep in mind, however, that a strategic plan should be a *living* document—actually more of a process than a piece of paper. Goals set the general direction, but the institution must be able to respond to the ever-changing environment. This means that the PR office must be prepared to develop new strategies and rechannel its resources when necessary.

Carving your niche

Two major elements of the strategic planning process offer you an opportunity to benefit your PR office and your institution.

1. *Environmental scanning.* Capitalize on your office's function of monitoring the media. Instead of looking just for specific mentions of your institution, start tracking trends that may have strong impact in the future, such as emerging technologies or shifts in research funding. You might informally pass the information on by sending copies of articles or reports to appropriate administrators. Or you may want to take responsibility for preparing the external environment section of the university's plan, as we in the public affairs office have done.

In his book *Academic Strategy: Planning and the New Management Style in American Higher Education,* management consultant George Keller recommends that campuses pay attention to five general areas when forecasting trends:

- *The economy*—inflation, family economics, trends in faculty salaries.
- *Demographics*—projections for numbers of traditional college-age individuals and where they will live.
- *Technology*—the impact of computers, telecommunications, transportation, and so on.
- *The politico-legal environment*—trends in federal and state support for research and financial aid, and court decisions relating to education.
- *Socio-cultural trends*—shifts in values and lifestyles.

Gathering this type of information will give you a better understanding of what your institution faces and what kinds of PR support you'll need to create for specific areas. Also, performing this function will help you promote yourself as a senior manager.

2. *Assessing your institution's strengths and weaknesses.* Strategic planning must start with an understanding of how such vital publics as students, faculty, and alumni perceive the institution. Although most great planners usually think they already know the prevailing perceptions, the only way to know for sure is through research. Perceptions and attitudes are the business of PR, so it's appropriate for you to take the leadership role in defining the nature and scope of your institution's research projects.

Nothing can convince you of the value of perception research more than data that contradict your own notions. For example, for the past several years we continued to believe that the University of Miami's recruiting efforts suffered because of the national media's focus on Miami's crime and civil unrest. Recent research indicates that such perceptions *are not* significant for most students considering the University of Miami.

However, we did find a correlation between the perception of our location as a tourist haven and negative perceptions of our academic quality. Armed with this new information, we've begun developing strategies for student recruitment, such as refocusing the messages in our publications and video programs to emphasize Miami's cosmopolitan environment and cultural opportunities.

It would be easy to congratulate ourselves on our wise use of research and creative applications, but we have only begun an endless process. We must evaluate new techniques and use that information to improve or modify strategies as the environment changes. For example, several years ago a slide/tape recruitment presentation might have been highly effective for telling our story to 17-year-olds. But that was before music videos and MTV.

PR planning should begin and end with research. There is probably nothing more fundamental (and difficult) for any PR office, large or small, to achieve than this. Just as the long-range planning committee's goals determine the university's direction, research makes it possible for the PR manager to set measurable objectives within the context of that university-wide plan. Research is expensive and time-consuming, but in today's increasingly competitive environment, it will cost you more *not* to do it.

If you're on your own

What do you do if your institution doesn't have a strategic plan?

Look around. Most likely some type of institutional planning already exists that can serve as a basis for your public relations plan. Even plans done for separate academic units or for financial purposes can be useful, although you may find that the goals are not mutually supportive.

Be the catalyst for getting your institution started on strategic planning. Gather and pass along information on the external environment; point out impending disasters and opportunities. When confronted with frightening demographic projections or probable economic doom, your institution's leaders may decide it's time to start looking ahead.

Then the only sparks your staff will have to attend to will be the creative kind.

Using PR Tools to Boost Recruitment

by Irma L. Rabbino

It's not necessary to use exotic PR tools to recruit students. In doing the usual things, be aware of how they might attract students.

Public relations and admissions are on the same team. Part of your job may be to help find out why applications are down in a certain area—even if it's because the alumni recruiter in that area is turning people off or because a guidance counselor's daughter was rejected back in 1961.

Take time to brainstorm with the admissions staff and to keep in touch with everyone, especially the field representatives, those recent graduates who visit the high schools and show the filmstrip. They are getting the queries. Find out what materials they'd like to have.

Practice the fine art of public relations with the admissions office, too. Don't tell them you have too much work to help them out. Anticipate their needs. Be ready to be flexible and respond rapidly. The pressure is on the admissions director, and you can relieve some of it.

The magic of marketing

It might help to use marketing principles in developing your communications approach. If we don't take the initiative in this direction, we may find a marketing approach forced on us.

Traditionally, the admissions staff has had the responsibilities both of supervising the selection process and of "selling" the institution. The skills that we in public relations are supposed to have—words, images, painting a clear and accurate picture of our institution—fit in naturally with the selling part of the admissions director's obligation. Theoretically at least, our communications skills complement the admissions director's experience. Admissions prescribes, and we execute. But it's high time we took more initiative in the selling process.

So how do we do this? It's hard to say, but I recommend that you first try to improve your perspective. Try to peer over that pile of daily paperwork to look at the priorities of the institution and see where you are most needed. Try to put yourself in the place of your admissions director and see the world as he or she sees it.

Then sharpen up your sense of the job you can do. Too often PR has simply responded to the squeaky wheel. If you're good, you *are* the squeaky wheel.

Now adopt the attitude that the admissions office is a client. Get some firsthand knowledge—walk through the admissions process; talk to student guides, freshmen, and parents. Go to a college fair or an admissions tea—some social chatter may be your substitute for a multi-thousand dollar market research survey. Get in touch with your alumni who work in admissions. See them informally at councils and reunions, and ask them what's going on in their communities.

And start using all the tools of the trade you can muster, with all the skill you have. Just to remind you of your resources, let me review our tools of the trade.

The national media

Of course wire and syndicated stories give the broadest coverage, but you can add other print media tools to your kit. You can:

- *Get in touch—and keep in touch—with major education editors.* Have your president comment on national issues.
- *Figure out what's special about your institution.* Capitalize on that specialty whenever you can, even if it's that yours is the only college in South Diddley County offering a major in zither-playing.
- *Establish a bond with colleges that have similar interests and problems, and speak together publicly.*
- *Find faculty experts to comment on national trends that relate to their fields, from the Middle East to alcohol abuse.*
- *Study trend stories.* Figure out how various education writers think; talk to those writers; contribute some ideas of your own.
- *Follow the statistical studies (e.g., ACE's annual report on college students' attitudes).* Find out where your institution jibes or deviates; and try to sell a story on that nationally.
- *Note your own institution's academic trends.* You can often sell both trend and counter-trend stories (a grassroots demand for Latin courses? a boycott on business majors?).
- *Remember the ethnic newspapers.* The best way to say, "You're welcome here" is to send publicity about other students to appropriate papers. They're usually receptive to good material.
- *Train some of your key administrators to deal effectively with the electronic media.* Hold devil's advocate sessions with them and turn on the heat. Be sure to record the session so your subject can see his or her performance and weed out distracting verbal and physical mannerisms.
- *Latch on to national TV coverage of an event in your area if you can.* If the economic reports are delicious, or distasteful, powder the noses of your top economists and put them on the line with the media.

Local and hometown media

Prepare as many potential special features for the hometown papers as you can. Go beyond the usual three-line graduation story, and work on stories about elections to Phi Beta Kappa, entering freshmen, outstanding athletes. People read these stories. And make the operation as efficient as you can. Write a module about the joys and wonders of your institution. The module may get axed in most of the stories, but when it does get in, it works.

- *Alert hometown media when students are due home so that reporters can do stories out there from firsthand contact.* A plus, not so incidental, is that you don't have to write them.

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- *Take advantage of your alumni, and alert editors to stories of the citizens Kane or Connie out there.* When volunteers visit campus, have them fill out bio forms citing their community activities. When you write the hometown story about your annual fund solicitor's campus visit, the story will get more attention if you mention that he or she also heads the hometown's hospital board.
- *Remember small suburban papers.* They get read, and they also are generous about their space. A large article in a small paper might be worth more than a small article in a large one.
- *Know your constituency and use your energies to serve your recruitment effort.* Target stories to areas from which you draw students. If you saturate Louisiana, you may still get only two students. If you saturate Louisville you might get 12. (Of course, neither Louisville nor Louisiana will let you saturate it, but you can at least try.)
- *Encourage local alumni clubs to have events honoring local alumni and local students.* Have a corps of volunteer press people in each area to cover such events.
- *Encourage alumni to clip alumni magazine stories by and about alumni in their area and feed them to the local "lifestyles" editor.*
- *Keep your college alive in the heart of your own community.* Don't assume you are hometowner's last choice. Publicize events that might attract local high school students to your campus; make local people feel welcome.
- *Send a copy of each student hometowner to the parents.* If they don't see the story in the paper, they might call up the editor or send in their copy. As a fringe benefit, you may generate a free clipping service.
- *Contact the media when members of your admissions staff, or anyone else from the college, travels.* Let them talk in general terms and offer hints that will be helpful to all students. You'll get better coverage if they talk about how to get into college, not just how to get into yours.

A plethora of publications

If this is in your area of operation, apply the same recruitment overview. Don't wait for the admissions office to tell you what it needs. Evaluate your publications, suggest new ones, and phase out the old.

- *Think brochures.* Think posters, pamphlets, sports schedules.
- *Student-written recruitment brochures are a superb source that inspires the confidence of the candidate.* Keep a firm hand on this project, though, and don't let the copy lapse into jargon.
- *Remember reprints.* You can send good alumni magazine articles to candidates or the press or both.
- *Don't forget you're an academic institution.* Make sure your publications describe the excitement of learning.
- *Write a newsletter tailored to the candidate—or to the guidance counselor, or parents of prospective students.* You can't do them all, but one might work for you.
- *Take a look at the mail that goes out to prospective students, as well as to current students and parents.* See if it's doing the job. You should even look at the mail going out from your business offices. This could be tricky, but, if you're good, you have the tact to do it.
- *Remember the destination of your catalogs and viewbooks.* Picture them in the guidance counselor's office, very likely in a bookcase. You may need to do something spine-tingling to draw attention to your institution.
- *By all means be honest in describing your institution.* If you lure students with false claims, attrition will zoom, as will your PR problems.

Electronic wonders.

- *Take a whirl at a filmstrip.* See what you can do in-house with a tape recorder and some good slides. You may start small, but you may be lucky and find out that you can produce in-house what costs a fortune to get outside.
- *Universities can produce cassettes and tapes for mass distribution to radio stations, but even if yours is a small college, you can do it occasionally on a small scale.* Remember that National Public Radio is out there and may love a tape of that special lecture. (But be sure to get clearance from everyone.)
- *When you add to your staff, look for people who are comfortable with the electronic media.* It's crucial to your future.
- *Use photographs of all sorts, lavishly.* Make them available to alumni for local events. A little friendly photo album showing pictures of your college, left lying casually on a table, will be perused carefully by alumni as well as candidates.
- *If you're up to it, start a student electronic media project.*

Fairs and festivals

1. *On campus:* Bring high school stu-

dents to your campus by any method you or your alumni can conceive. If they come as part of an open campus or acquaintance program, fine; but it's just as good if it's for a meeting of a nonrelated group like the Girl or Boy Scouts or the Future Farmers of America. Give each visitor a little gift package that contains a few brochures.

- *If you're renting the campus to groups for the summer, look for groups of high school students or organizations made up of their parents.*
- *Invite the community to attend as many college events as you can.* Get the word out when your art gallery has a new exhibition or when your arboretum has a fall flower show.
- *Invite alumni to bring their families when they return to campus.* Arrange tours for alumni children of high school age.
- *Consider it your responsibility to do the publicity for outside groups coming to campus.* Get in touch, offer hospitality, and you'll make friends.
- *Think of conferences that could be part of your academic year program and that would attract the kind of people and press interest that you want.*
- *Look at your students' parents just as you look at your alumni.* How can you use them?

2. *Off campus:* Help upgrade alumni events. They should move from cookie sales to something of greater service to the community.

- *Look for opportunities to sponsor book awards to outstanding high school students.* They bring the institution's name to the students' attention and associate it with leadership qualities. Local scholarships may do the same.
- *Go to college fairs, college nights, alumni recruitment teas, and see what they're all about.* See which recruitment parties work and which don't. If alumni teas lack pizzazz, how about pizza parties? Barbecues?
- *Invite the press to attend appropriate off-campus events.* You might get a good story.

Public service

Think about what you can offer the world that may not be just an obvious pitch for your institution. How about free booklets on solar energy or on how to cram for an exam? They can be written in general terms, but readers will still recall that they got the booklet from you. To aid recruitment, it would be smart if the booklet dealt with something that would interest potential admission candidates.

Buttons, bows, furbelows

Try: logo buttons, banners, decals for automobiles, notebooks, T-shirts, and sweatshirts. Or get a billboard at O'Hare Airport. (Drake University did.) Or find an elderly man on a bike singing the praises of your college. (Simpson College did.)

We're in the midst of the challenge of the '80s—making sure that quality higher education survives. What could be more exciting?

The Wizardry of Computer Connections

Ten ways to use your computer in PR

by Suzanne R. Green

Eric Broudy, director of news and information services at Brown University, was slouched in a chair at home reading after a taxing Memorial Day. Valery Giscard d'Estaing, Helen Thomas, Laurance Rockefeller, and several others had received honorary degrees at Brown's commencement that morning. And although everything had gone well, he was glad to have a breather.

Then the phone rang. "What years," a reporter asked, "was Valery Giscard d'Estaing France's president?"

Although Broudy couldn't remember and didn't have his files at home, he had the answer in minutes. After persuading his 15-year-old son to relinquish the home computer, Broudy called up the appropriate office file on campus 10 miles away. Presto! Soon, Broudy was back to his book.

Suzanne R. Green is media relations coordinator at McMaster University, in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

These days, more and more of us in campus public relations believe in the magic of microcomputers. With a simple command, you can send news releases to media instantly with no paper-pushing. You can prepare and send individualized hometown news releases in one-third the time and with less staff than you imagined possible. And when a media request comes through with a tight deadline attached, you can deftly summon the pertinent data to satisfy the demand.

Magical? You bet. And smart, too.

Not every campus PR office is automated, even today. But from some that are, I've gleaned a sampling of tasks you can perform in your PR office with the help of computers. Use this checklist to see whether you're getting the most out of your automation.

1. Storing information

At McMaster University, we've developed retrieval coding for all materials that we generate from our office—news releases, PSAs, photos, slides, videotapes, and other audio-visuals. We can also organize general information files on subjects related to faculty interests. We use this information as background when writing releases, especially on complex scientific topics, and to provide information useful to faculty, staff, and students. Even more importantly, our ability to find faculty experts quickly and accurately has greatly increased our credibility with the news media.

Ways to use this sort of stored data are almost limitless. For example, you can:

- *Analyze media coverage.* At McMaster, our information storage system gives us the ability to catalog and examine our newspaper and magazine clippings. This allows us to report to the administration on news trends and angles involving the university.

Brown University has a system that logs in all media contacts as they occur. Then, especially after a big story, staff members review those media contacts to see what angles the media were considering, what kind of media covered the story, and where the media were located.

According to Mark Nickel, associate director of news and information services, members of Brown's staff use this data to fine-tune their approaches to the media. They also use it to keep each other informed about media contacts and calls.

- *Answer queries quickly.* Brown also maintains separate computerized archives of its news releases, university newspaper, and alumni magazine. So, when a reporter calls to ask, for example, how many students applied to Brown last year, in 10 seconds Nickel can call up the appropriate news release and zap, it's there. Archival files hold material for up to two years. Then the staff has it copied onto computer tape for storage.

Similarly, the University of Washington has computerized its office morgue, which includes faculty and staff biographical information. Using a database program, staffers can search the file quickly, says Information Services Director Bob Roseth.

For example, let's say Roseth gets a media call asking for an expert on acid rain. With a few simple keystrokes, he gets a list of staff-written articles and news releases, plus where to find background information. Eventually, Roseth says, the database should also include the names of UW experts in various fields.

Some news bureaus even use outside databanks to get quick answers. At Brigham Young University, all campus offices, including the PR office, can plug into a databank, available for a fee, that allows campus staff to tap into worldwide newswire services.

Says Paul Richards, director of public communications, "We simply type in key words like 'Brigham Young' and pick up all references to these words in the stories of more than 23 wire services." This, of course, helps him find out if his institution or its people are involved in breaking news.

- *Recycle information.* At Stanford University, News Service Director Bob Beyers uses his database of news releases and other material to recycle the information in publications for recruitment, internal audiences, the community, and so on. The university paper, the *Campus Report*, includes the texts of many of his news releases each week. Selected releases go into other publications. The key editing time-saver, Beyers says, is to "write it [the release] right the first time." Then he can re-use the material without additional editing.

- *Produce impact reports.* At Indiana University, the system office of university relations uses a databank of statistical information gained from periodic surveys to put together reports on IU's eight campuses. The reports pinpoint faculty and administrative achievements and assess their economic impact on the state. Twice a year, the staff sends reports of its findings to administrative officers on the different campuses so they can use them as source material for speeches.

- *Maintain files.* As we do at McMaster, Bill Giduz, assistant director of college relations at Davidson College, uses his system to maintain photo files. In the past, he kept photo records on index cards, each listing a description of the shot, the date, the photographer, the size, and the contact sheet number. Then he stored contact sheets in a three-ring binder. This system worked, but it was cumbersome.

Now Giduz uses a software program to do all of this and more. He stores photo information in the system and calls it up on his terminal screen when he needs it. Via computer, he cross-files photos under multiple subject headings. And he plans to keep files for slides and audio tapes, something he couldn't do before. He still, however, keeps the contact sheets in three-ring binders.

- *Cultivate media.* Rather than simply building targeted, up-to-date media lists by hand, Texas A&M University is developing an extensive media databank. According to Director of Public Information Lane Stephenson, the databank will include information about what kinds of stories particular reporters covered the last time they contacted A&M or A&M contacted them, and whether a story resulted. As with similar databanks of donor or alumni information, this one will let the staff keep tabs on such things as whether the reporter hates phone calls or loves tennis.

Exactly how will this databank work? Let's say A&M has a visiting VIP who's going to speak on international trade. The bank will be set up so that each reporter's file includes key words that identify particular interests. To get a printout of all reporters who cover international trade, a staff member types in those key words, and abracadabra, the system prints the appropriate names on labels.

2. Streamlining tasks

At McMaster, we've developed computerized formats for everything from file cards for photos to spreadsheets for our departmental budgets.

Dale Allison, director of news services at the University of Alabama, uses a software program to check spelling in news releases and other articles. The program covers not only common words, but also certain proper names—like the chancellor's name, names with unusual spellings, and local place names.

And when commencement rolls around at Carnegie Mellon University, Manager of Special Projects Maryann Moore simply updates the ceremony's script, memos to faculty, letters to trustees, and so on. She has formats from the past four years' commencement material to use as reference.

Moore also uses the computer to simplify a dazzling array of other tasks. To issue personal invitations to a special event, she merges two software programs. One creates the letter format and the other plugs in the personal information.

For a mega-event to launch Carnegie Mellon's $200 million capital campaign last spring, Moore used a software program to issue invitations and compile alphabetized names and addresses of those who requested tickets. At the end of each day, she could receive a report telling her how many tickets had been sold, how much money had been raised through ticket sales, and how many tickets had been distributed. She was also able to print out mailing labels. Soon she hopes to produce name badges.

At Texas A&M, Stephenson is developing a personnel management software program to measure staff productivity. "We'll spell out the yearly goals and objectives and monitor each staff member's activities weekly or monthly," he says. These activities will include, for example, story placements and media contacts. While Stephenson admits that this system may be imperfect, he thinks it will give "some reading on the success of an employee."

3. Distributing news

Computers, of course, can greatly simplify the way you write and edit news releases, PSAs, and other material. You can easily revise releases to localize them, provide a special news angle, or make them fit a broadcast format. Computerized mailing lists make targeted distribution easier as well.

Some institutions now send releases electronically to wire services and newspapers by special arrangement. At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, for example, Director of University Information Bob Bruce regularly files stories with United Press International and sends releases directly to major Nebraska dailies and weeklies.

Oregon State University's acting director of information, Wally Johnson, does the same thing—with a twist. Using an "auto-dial" system he developed with the help of his campus computer center, he has a staff member input stories for each of 12 papers he's targeted. Then, at the press of a button, OSU's computer phones each paper's computer and transmits the stories in turn. If one phone line is busy, the computer goes on to the next paper and comes back later.

Although this job used to take hours to do manually, it now takes a staff member only 15 minutes. Johnson says by this fall he expects to reach 30 dailies, weeklies, and specialized publications through this system. Already he can transmit to *USA Today*.

Iowa State University and several other campuses in the state use the for-profit Iowa Information Network (IIN) to distribute many of their releases. The beauty of this system, says ISU News Editor John Anderson, is that IIN handles the equipment compatibility problems with newspapers and broadcast outlets. At this point, some 135 news outlets, including all major papers and wire services and a number of TV and radio stations, receive releases via IIN's electronic system.

A computer link to wire services and newspapers obviously works best for public institutions, which are accountable to the citizens of their state, and for institutions that are far from major print media. For details on the Penn State Newswire, see the sidebar on page 22.

At the University of Guelph in Ontario, Executive Editor Sandra Webster reports that she's working on a plan to help create a National Universities Wire Service (NUWS). She presented a proposal for NUWS to the Public Affairs Council for Education at a Canadian Council for the Advancement of Education meeting in June 1986.

Through this service, all Canadian universities would send menus of their news stories electronically to a central NUWS office in Ottawa. Ideally, Canadian news media would then link with NUWS for education news. Webster hopes that eventually federal and provincial education ministries and education lobbyists would sign on, too.

She is also developing a three-tiered software program for NUWS users. "A desk editor would call up our daily menu on his or her terminal," she explains. "The editor would get a list of slugs [short headlines] describing each news item. If there is interest in any of the stories, the editor could press a key and get a paragraph about the story. If he or she presses another key, the entire release would appear along with any information about available accompanying materials."

Editors should find this system convenient, she explains, because they wouldn't have to load their files with unwanted material. They could survey offerings and pick only what they want.

4. Handling hometown releases

Although they were the curse of the public relations office before computers, hometowners are now coming into their own.

Carnegie Mellon's Assistant Vice President for University Relations Don Hale explains his office's solution to the hometowner headache this way. "By typing a few numbers into the computer, our system will match the ZIP code of the person being honored with the newspapers that cover that ZIP code. Then it prints the address of the newspaper, along with a short description of the person, onto a letter-quality printer," he says. Because Carnegie Mellon's staff uses this program for mass mailings, it relies on list processing, which eliminates the need to search manually for a newspaper and print its address.

How has automating helped in generating hometowners? "Compared to previous years when the hometowning project was done manually," says Brown's Eric Broudy, "this year the news bureau mailed its releases four weeks earlier, reducing the amount of time in which the office needed part-time student help by nearly six weeks." This saved hundreds of dollars and, he says, "significantly improved both the appearance and individual content of each release."

For more on computerized hometowners, see page 22.

5. Maintaining mailing lists

Like many automated PR offices, at McMaster we have computerized our lists for media, government officials, academic staff, and so on. Special coding systems enable us to call up specific subgroups in these lists.

For instance, we can call up all radio stations in Hamilton, Ontario, or all weekly newspapers in Ontario. We can sort these lists in several orders and print out information as reports, labels, or lists. We can also update these lists immediately and locate information by key words.

6. Communicating

At Carnegie Mellon, where PR staffers' offices are scattered, electronic mail is an everyday way to communicate.

At Guelph, Webster is in computer contact not only with her assistant editor and reporters but also with the entire university network, including the president's office. The university's computer conferencing system allows Webster to read others' positions on a given subject, relate her own opinion, and make decisions.

In Canada, all universities are linked by an electronic mail network. It's part of an international network, BITNET, which connects some 1,250 computers at more than 400 higher education institutions and research centers.

7. Producing publications

If your PR office coordinates campus publications, a computer helps here, too. Using a new generation of software and hardware, you can accomplish not only word processing but page processing, too.

Called desktop publishing, this procedure lets you combine text and graphics on a display screen. Depending on the programs, you might cut and paste material, wrap copy around graphics, change type styles and sizes, and add rules or shading to produce the page look you want. You can then use a laser printer to print out a finished page suitable for reproduction. [See the February 1987 issue of CURRENTS for more information on desktop publishing.]

8. Coordinating calendars

The University of Southern California and Brown University have computerized campus bulletin boards available to announce information on lectures, concerts, and so on. At Brown, anyone who has a user ID code and name can enter information on the bulletin board, Brown's Nickel says.

According to Maryann Moore, Carnegie Mellon's new facilities coordinator hopes to schedule meeting rooms with the help of a software package. Using the program, the coordinator can find out, for example, whether a room is available in a certain building or at a certain time and which groups have reserved rooms. To reserve a room, a CMU staff member merely tells the coordinator the date and the name of the group planning to meet. The computer then produces a meeting confirmation.

9. Getting organized

At the university of Alabama, Dale Allison uses her computer system to help her remember things and store ideas. "I think into it," she says. She even keeps her "to do" list in the system. As she points out, it beats having torn bits of paper all over your desk.

Brown's Nickel says that because most news bureau staffers there have their own home computers, they can use telephone modems provided by the news bureau to do homework on stories and other projects.

10. Trouble-shooting

This brings us back to the way Eric Broudy's home computer helps him at Brown. If your phone rings in the middle of the night with news of a campus fire, you can carry out your crisis plan immediately. If your home computer links to the one at your office, in a few second, you can have all the needed lists, files, and other information at your fingertips.

Where to Start

If you'd like more information about the electronic tricks mentioned in this checklist, here are names of people to contact. With the help of these folks and your computer, you can create your own sorcery.

Dale Allison
Associate Director of University Relations
University of Alabama
University, AL 35486

John Anderson
News Editor
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011

Bob Beyers
Director, News Services
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305

Eric Broudy
Director, News and Information
Brown University
Providence, RI 02912

Robert Bruce
Director of University Information
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, NE 68588

Bill Giduz
Assistant Director, College Relations
Davidson College
Davidson, NC 28036

James L. Green
University Director, News Service and Media Communications
Indiana University, Bloomington
Room 300, Bryan Hall
Bloomington, IN 47405

Suzanne Green
Media Relations Coordinator
McMaster University
Gilmour Hall 120
1280 Main Street West
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8S 4L8

Don Hale
Assistant Vice President for University Relations
Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Wally Johnson
Director of Information
Oregon State University
Corvallis, OR 97331

Maryann Moore
Manager of Special Projects
Carnegie Mellon University
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Paul Richards
Director, Public Communications
Brigham Young University
Provo, UT 84602

Bob Roseth
Director, Information Services
University of Washington
Seattle, WA 98195

Lane Stephenson
Director, Public Information
Texas A&M University
College Station, TX 77843

Wizards of the Wires

by Roger L. Williams and Bill Mahon III

The Penn State Newswire takes the now-common practice of sending news releases electronically one step further. It offers client newspapers in Pennsylvania a steady stream of editorial material from Penn State unavailable elsewhere—research news stories, op-eds, faculty-written columns, hometown features, and calendars of events.

Newswire's popularity has surprised even us. In the service's first few months, five newspaper editors who'd heard about us from other satisfied editors asked how they could become clients. And one client editor suggested that his company would even be willing to *pay* for a column we were developing.

Our year-old mini-wire service is free. But the service's results—significantly increased quantity and quality of published university news stories—more than repay us for our efforts.

What's so different?

What makes Newswire unique is the way it's modeled after AP and UPI, conceptually as well as technically. Each day of the week we offer regular features: an outdoors column by a Penn State faculty member every Tuesday; a column by a Penn State astronomer every Wednesday; an op-ed by a different Penn State faculty member every Thursday; and so on. Naturally, these kinds of features not only serve our clients but also let us showcase Penn State by drawing on faculty experts to discuss timely topics.

In contrast to the computer networks that some campus PR offices have bought into on a per-page basis, Penn State controls its system completely. We determine what stories go on the newswire, and we can target stories to some newspapers and limit distribution to the rest.

Roger L. Williams is executive director of university relations and Bill Mahon III is director of public information at Pennsylvania State University.

Our news bureau staff, composed of seven former newspaper and wire service reporters, takes great pains to cover campus news events and turn out stories the same day, even on evenings and weekends. So news releases don't arrive in the mail days after the event. To maintain editors' interest, the news bureau sends several stories of general interest every weekday.

When there's a late-breaking story, such as an earthquake in Pennsylvania, we send a bulletin to Newswire clients. And, of course, we can immediately refer editors to our faculty experts.

The key to making the system work is a steady flow of solid, journalistic stories, written in commercial wire service style. Substance, not fluff, is the bedrock of Newswire.

What's happened

Whatever reluctance editors may have felt about allowing our public information office to download into their computers has dissipated. And thanks to Newswire, we find that more newspapers use a larger number of Penn State articles. The stories appear in print much faster because newspapers no longer have to rekeyboard the stories before typesetting them. And the printed articles closely resemble our original version. Frequently, in fact, newspapers print our stories verbatim.

We've also found that Newswire clients are more likely to use our stories than newspapers to which we mail releases. For instance, our bimonthly reports show that, in the year before we set up the Newswire, we placed from 46 to 74 stories every two months in Harrisburg's two papers, the *Patriot* and the *Evening News*. (Harrisburg is an important market for our stories because it's the state capital.) In the period right after the electronic transmission of stories began with the Harrisburg newspapers, our bimonthly range rose to between 125 and 134 articles.

A slow start

Newswire didn't develop overnight, however. In 1984 the Penn State News Bureau first transmitted its daily collection of news releases to the mainframe computer of the local daily newspaper. Within a year, we added three other papers and UPI's Pittsburgh bureau to the list of media receiving our copy electronically.

This limited system worked beautifully, but we wanted to provide more news copy to more newspapers. Writing unique software programs for downloading our material into each client newspaper's mainframe was time-consuming and tedious. And it required expertise we didn't have. After nearly a year of following up tips on communications software, we finally found a company that could make the connections for us—quickly.

In addition to the software, all we needed to begin the project on a wide scale was a personal computer with a hard disk drive and a modem. Our own expert rigged the computer to wake itself at midnight each night to transmit the Penn State stories for that day. This allows us to take advantage of the telephone company's less expensive rate period.

In the planning stages, we thought we would need a half-time secretary to operate Newswire each day. To our surprise, we found the job required only an hour's work per day by our news bureau secretary, who has managed to incorporate this work into her other responsibilities.

In December 1985, we began adding one or two newspapers a week to the newswire. Whether or not we included a paper depended on an editor's interest in the service, as expressed in a previous mail survey (see "How'm I Doing?" on page 26), and on how close the paper was to one of Penn State's 22 campuses.

Today, 30 of the more than 90 Pennsylvania dailies receive articles each day via Newswire. Their combined circulation tops 1 million. And because UPI has no reporters based near our main campus, it relies on selected Newswire stories for Penn State coverage. This gives us coverage in UPI's 55 client newspapers in Pennsylvania and hundreds across the country.

For the future

We plan to continue expanding the number of Newswire clients. Eventually, we'd like to serve clients outside Pennsylvania, and we hope to approach major papers such as *USA Today* later this year.

We're also working to provide more diverse editorial content. In addition to regular items like the arts calendar of events (every Friday) and the exercise column (every Monday), we're developing more weekly columns, including one on health and another on food.

Our cost to run the service is minimal. As we noted above, we haven't had to hire additional clerical help. The major expense is our phone bill, which has gone up by about $200 per month. This figure may grow as we add more papers—or it may drop as we find cheaper ways to transmit stories.

One editor has suggested that we charge campus PR offices outside the Penn State system to use the service. While the extra funds are tempting, we think this project should remain, in every sense of the word, the Penn State Newswire.

Computer to the Rescue

How a multi-terminal computer system helps stretch a small news bureau staff

by Louis Margot

If your news bureau is short on time and staff, maybe a computer can save your life. It certainly has rescued the East Texas State University News Service.

If anybody needed help, we did. Within three years, our news staff dropped from six (three writers, a sports information director, and two secretaries) to three (one writer, a sports information director, and an office manager responsible for both clerical duties and news writing). Meanwhile, our workload stayed the same. We must provide news, feature, and hometown coverage and produce an internal newsletter, alumni publications, and other publications as well.

The way it works

What does our system do? And how does it work? Let's start with its editing capability, one of its best features.

You may not realize it, but you probably spend more time editing than writing. Previously, when a writer handed a story to me for editing, I corrected it, corrected my corrections, and then turned it over to a typist. After the story was on a stencil, I had to proof it again. Now, since ETSU has more than 100 terminals all over the campus, some departments write their own releases and send them to me electronically for editing and release.

I edit the story once, then let the computer arrange the text in a journalistic format. Once the story is edited, I can do one of three things:

- *Handle it as a general feature or news story and send it to one of two typewriter-quality computer printers in the campus print shop.* The print shop, located a half block from us, also has a quick copy machine that reproduces the typewritten copy for mailing. The charge for using this typewriter-quality printer is 10 cents per page, $1 minimum. It's cheaper to hire the computer to type than to hire a secretary.
- *Prepare the copy for typesetting in the print shop.* This is the routine for stories that will appear in our alumni publications. Because the central computer can "talk to" the WANG typesetter, we actually set type as we write stories for certain publications.
- *Send the story to a wire service or newspaper computer.* A few commands from the terminals in our office automatically send a story to the United Press International computers. Because I have been working at ETSU and with UPI for 17 years, I didn't have to persuade it to accept our news. It is interested primarily in ETSU sports news and other good feature or news copy. We are also able to send certain noncompetitive material (breaking news, sports follow-up stories, and so on) by computer to Associated Press. We are now talking to newspaper representatives about adding them to our "computer-to-computer" mailing list.

We might handle some stories all three ways. For example, a story about distinguished alumni awards goes to a general release list, the alumni publications, and UPI. With word processing, we have eliminated rekeyboarding by an office typist, by a typesetter in the print shop who once set type for the alumni publication, by the wire service, and by any newspaper that we can reach by computer.

Filing, another feature

A word processing system can also help you file. We have neither filed nor misfiled hard copy since we converted to computer. We put all stories into one file. We find and retrieve a story in a matter of seconds by searching for a key work, a key phrase, or a date. This eliminates the need to file alphabetically or chronologically.

For example, I did a story on an instructor receiving a major award and included a list of her achievements and biographical information. A couple of months later, she asked me to do a short release about her being named to an office. I knew I had considerable information about her in the files. So, instead of doing a two-paragraph story, I did a two-page story. When she read the story, she was flattered that I had written in detail. She also pointed out that I had made the same mistake in the new story I had made two months before. (Computers don't correct errors we mortals make.)

Our computer files are safer than cabinets because the computer center

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Louis Margot is news service director at East Texas State University in Commerce, Texas.

makes a tape each night of all information entered into the computer. If I delete the mailing list (I have, on occasion), and know it was in the file yesterday, I can call the computer center and ask a staff member to restore it.

Because our system is campus-wide, I am usually near a terminal and thus near my files. Soon, we'll make our files public so that students and faculty can use them, too.

Hometown merger

With the computer, we have actually done more hometown stories with less staff. My goal is a batch that could range from 15 to 300 stories per day.

Here's how we do it. We merge a mailing list that a department has stored in the computer with the story and the newspaper mailing list. For instance, let's say that the continuing education office uses the word processor to write letters to 200 people who attend a workshop. I take the continuing education mailing list, manipulate it, and merge it with text. Then I merge the text and news service mailing list. Codes on the mailing list instruct the computer to address the release about the student to his or her hometown newspapers and radio stations.

This ability to merge hometown addresses and copy enables us to "write" more hometown features as well. If I do a story about an unusual class, I interview more than one person and get more information than I need for one story. With word processing, I can use the best quotes for the general release and insert quotes from other students for their hometown newspapers.

With the merge capability, I have "written" as many as 400 individualized, typewritten stories in a week without a secretary and without disrupting the office.

We use the computer for internal communication, too. Computer users at ETSU get the day's campus news, calendar of events, a list of faculty and staff who are celebrating birthdays, and even trivia questions by typing "help news" on their terminals.

The "news page" is updated at least once a day. While the news usually consists of announcements of meetings and workshops, it can also include breaking news. For instance, recent meetings of the Board of Regents have been of particular interest on campus because ETSU is searching for a new president. Recently when the board went into executive session we filed a lead on the computer about the actions taken. After the executive session, the board passed more motions, and we updated the story.

Big obstacle: The mailing list

Perhaps the biggest obstacle in computerizing our news service was designing and coding a mailing list. It still has a few bugs, but it is a big improvement over what we were doing.

Both news service and sports information work from the same mailing list. Thus, when the sports information director gets an address change, he automatically updates the news service list.

Because of coding, I can select media by classification (immediate area dailies, regional radio stations, music publications, and so on) or by city (Greenville, Commerce, Dallas, Houston). If I select Greenville, I will get all of the newspaper and electronic media addresses in that city. Thus, I can do a hometown news release for two newspapers and a radio station in Greenville as easily as for just the daily paper.

Consequently, we print labels each day from an up-to-date mailing list for the releases to be mailed that day. We can easily select and print 200 labels in 15 minutes.

Pointers on computers

If computerization looms on your news bureau's horizon, consider these tips about word processing and computers.

- *Technology doesn't replace strong leads and good journalism.* The wire services want to move as much good information as they can. When you file a story into their computer, you have made it easier to edit. But it's still easy for the editor to delete it if it's no good.
- *Consider the advantages of time-sharing computers.* ETSU found it cheaper to tie offices to the central computer than to buy several stand-alones at $20,000-plus per unit. Our terminals cost $650, less than a new typewriter. Because we're tied into a campus-wide system, we have easy access to class schedules; parents' names, addresses, and phone numbers; information about faculty, staff, and alumni; and even the status of a requisition in the business office.
- *Don't allow unauthorized personnel to have access to procedures required to get into computers.*
- *Learn to manipulate your system.* We have taught our word processing system to do what *we* want it to do. We make features designed to do one thing do another. Thus, I have written a special set of directions on how to use word processing in our office.
- *Don't worry about down time.* Our system crashes about three times a week, but we're usually up in about 15 minutes. Freak accidents, such as a drunk knocking down a utility pole, construction workers digging up a phone line, or even lightning, can knock it out for a day.

What's ahead?

Besides the three terminals that tie into our main computer, we also have an Apple II Plus, which we use as a remote. Our sports information director can take this terminal on the road for filing stories, and office personnel can take it home and do work. It also serves as a work station in the office.

How'm I Doing?

A survey of editors can help you fine-tune your public relations program

by Roger L. Williams

Higher education makes a good source for news, and most college and university news bureaus do a good job of providing it. Despite all we've heard about the impending demise of our stock-in-trade, newspaper editors still prefer to receive news releases. And news about hometown students continues to warm editors' hearts more than anything else we send them.

These are only some of the findings from a mail survey Penn State's department of public information conducted last year. We polled the editors or managing editors of all 92 dailies in Pennsylvania as well as 158 weekly newspaper editors. Our response rates would make a sociologist glow: 81.5 percent of the daily newspaper editors and 79 percent of their weekly counterparts returned the questionnaires.

We undertook the survey for many reasons. Basically, we wanted to know how editors rate the news value of colleges and universities in general and of Penn State in particular. After all, few audiences are as important as the editors who determine the contents of our state's newspapers day after day. And what these editors told us was, we thought, surprisingly positive.

Most important, however, we wanted to use the survey results to help us fine-tune our current operation and plan for the future.

The big picture

We first asked editors to agree or disagree with six statements. The editors responded by circling numbers on a five-point scale, from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

More than 97 percent of the dailies and 83 percent of the weeklies agreed with the statement: "Providing your newspaper's readership with news about higher education in Pennsylvania is important." The response was somewhat more positive on the dailies, where 55 percent marked "strongly agree," compared with 31 percent for the weeklies.

But the editors tempered their enthusiasm when asked to compare higher education's news value with that of institutions such as the state legislature or government agencies. About 67 percent of the daily editors agreed that news about higher education in Pennsylvania is "just as important" as that from other major noneducational institutions.

Locally, however, higher education grew in importance. Eighty-five percent of the dailies and 78 percent of the weeklies agreed that "news about colleges and universities in your circulation area is just as important as any other kind of local news."

Those of us who supply that news got generally high marks. Eighty-three percent of the dailies and 77 percent of the weeklies agreed with the statement, "In your experience, most college and university news bureaus or public information offices have performed credibly and professionally."

When confronted with "Penn State is an important newsmaker in the state of Pennsylvania," 85 percent of the dailies agreed (25 percent strongly). So did 85 percent of the weeklies (again, 25 percent strongly). This and the perception of academic quality are the only questions on which weeklies and dailies rated closely.

Finally, we asked daily editors whether the wire services, AP and UPI, provide enough news about Penn State to their newspapers. We expected the response to be a collective "Enough, already!" because our clips show that Penn State generates between 1.1 and 1.5 wire stories per calendar day.

But only 28 percent of the editors agreed that they receive sufficient wire coverage about Penn State. Another 28 percent neither agreed nor disagreed. A plurality of 36 percent disagreed, with another 5.3 percent strongly disagreeing.

For us, this finding is one of the most important of the survey. Penn State's main campus is located in rural central Pennsylvania, far from the state's major cities. Thus, we rely heavily on the wires for visibility in metropolitan news media.

Institutional image

We asked a series of questions to find out what the name Penn State meant to editors across the state. The 35,000-student University Park campus is the hub of the system, but an additional 21 campuses enroll 27,000 students throughout the state. Many editors, therefore, deal with PR officers at *both* University Park and their local campus.

What we wanted to know was whether editors, when they heard of Penn State, thought of their local campus or the main campus. Among other things, we discovered that daily and weekly editors think of Penn State as being *both* local and main campuses.

We wanted to find out, too, how editors felt about our public relations operation and about our institution in general. Our PR office got fairly high marks. Of the daily newspaper editors, 57 percent said Penn State's public information offices are "better than most" of the other such offices they deal with. Of the weekly editors, 26 percent said "better." For us, the true value of this question was to find out how many editors said we were *worse* than others: none of the dailies and 9 percent of the weeklies.

We also asked editors to rate Penn State's academic quality on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent). Of the daily editors, nearly 64 percent gave Penn State an 8 or higher. Twenty-three percent gave Penn State a 7; 8 percent gave it a 6; and 4 percent gave it a 5. Weekly editors echoed those perceptions, with 64 percent ranking Penn State at 8 or higher.

A question of this sort has practical value. Had editors responded with a modal (most frequently mentioned) score of 5 rather than 8, we would have devised a strategy to communicate stories that better reflect high academic quality. We thought we'd been

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Roger L. Williams is executive director of university relations at Pennsylvania State University.

doing that all along, but it's nice to have our hunches verified.

What kind of news?

The daily editors expressed "particular interest" in the following kinds of news, ranked in descending order:

1. local students attending Penn State, 91 percent;
2. enrollments and tuition, 80 percent;
3. research findings, 74 percent;
4. new academic programs, changes in priorities or direction, 64 percent;
5. local continuing education workshops and courses, 63 percent;
6. op-ed pieces by Penn State faculty members, 43 percent;
7. arts and cultural events, 31 percent; and
8. faculty members and their professional activities, 23 percent.

In contrast, the only news topics that interested most weekly editors were local students (93 percent) and continuing education workshops and courses (60 percent).

Editors also rated their interest in research news. Forty-one percent expressed high interest in business and economic research, 40 percent in agricultural research, and 40 percent in medical research. Twenty-eight percent expressed high interest in personal health and fitness research, 24 percent in science and technology, 19 percent in education research, 12 percent in social science, and 5 percent in the arts and humanities.

We asked how the daily editors would prefer to receive Penn State news. Eighty-four percent said news releases. Seventy-nine percent said via the wire services. Forty-nine percent said through their reporters' initiative. And 48 percent said from a Penn State public information officer.

Finally, we asked editors about their interest in establishing a computer link via phone lines for getting releases from our news bureau. (See "Wizards of the Wires," page 23.) Twenty-one percent said they were "very interested." Thirty-two percent indicated they might be interested but needed more information first.

Using the findings

An editors' survey has many implications and uses. Most important, however, is that it can rid your operation of guesswork. Based on our findings, we at Penn State have:

- talked to wire service bureaus about the demand from many state newspaper editors for more Penn State wire coverage,
- stepped up news bureau coverage of the College of Agriculture to meet the unexpected high interest in agricultural research news,
- received funding for the start-up of our electronic newswire because we now have proof that many editors are interested,
- found out why the editors of 11 weeklies thought ill of us and took steps to be more precise about the kinds of stories we send them, and
- revised our media mailing lists.

We also learned a lot that will help our planning. For example, the findings underscored the importance of the university relations officers at Penn State's far-flung campuses to the university's total PR effort. So that each PR officer has a better sense of his or her local editor's perceptions, we segmented editor's responses according to camus service areas.

We also learned that, since editors gave high ratings to the news value of both higher education and Penn State, we should generate more news. And despite all that's been said about the value of personal contact with news people, we now know not to forsake the news release.

In addition, despite our emphasis on research news, we are generating more diverse kinds of hometown student news with the help of student interns and volunteers.

The editors' survey has been of interest to other university administrators, notably the president. Administrators sometimes criticize PR people for their inability to produce quantifiable, bottom-line data about their programs. A survey such as this gives university policy-makers an indication of their PR operation's effectiveness.

For those of us who practice PR, an editors' survey can help not only to answer New York Mayor Ed Koch's constant query of "How'm I doing?" It can also help answer the question, "What should I do from now on?"

How to Get a Good Response on Your Editors' Survey

by Roger L. Williams

When we surveyed 92 daily and 158 weekly newspaper editors in Pennsylvania, our greatest concern was getting a response. After all, editors are inundated by pounds of mail every day. We weren't just worried they wouldn't fill out and return the questionnaire; we were afraid they wouldn't even notice the envelope.

Our fears were short-lived. Within 10 days, more than 50 percent of the daily newspaper editors had responded. Ultimately, nearly 82 percent did. The weekly editors responded in kind —more than 79 percent. Here are some steps that may help you get that kind of response from your editors' survey:

- *Read more about it.* Many techniques can increase the response to your mail survey. Two excellent books are Walter K. Lindenmann's *Attitude and Opinion Research* and Don Dillman's *Mail and Telephone Surveys: The Total Design Method. Attitude and Opinion Research* costs $16.50 (prepaid, includes shipping) from CASE Publications Order Dept., 80 S. Early St., Alexandria, VA 22304. *Mail and Telephone Surveys* is available for $42.95 (prepaid, includes shipping) from John Wiley and Sons, Inc., One Wiley Drive, Somerset, NJ 08873. Please mention ISBN #0-471-21555-4 when ordering.
- *Find an expert.* A nice thing about college campuses is the abundance of social scientists, who can surely help you design your survey. Our resident expert was Donna S. Queeney, director of planning studies for Penn State's Commonwealth Educational System. Not only is she a superb survey methodologist, but she also took an enthusiastic interest in the editors' survey.
- *Keep it short and simple.* No survey should ask more than it needs to. Also, if your questions are not clear, your survey may not be valid—it may not be measuring what it's supposed to measure. During the designing of the editors' survey, we got an object lesson of how *not* to do it. An education writers' organization sent out a mail survey that was a six-page ordeal loaded with ambiguous questions that asked us to recall our impressions of its publications.

So we made our survey brief: one page, front and back, with just 16 questions. The questions were multiple choice so that all the editors had to do was circle numbers. It took only about three minutes to fill out. We tested it on 10 writers and editors for clarity and brevity.

- *Make it easy to return.* We provided an addressed, stamped return envelope. All editors had to do was circle responses, fold the questionnaire, stick it in the envelope, and drop it in a mailbox. (Some mail survey experts advise placing a dollar or so in the envelope so that the recipient feels obligated to follow through. We felt it wouldn't be right for a public university to offer this kind of financial incentive.)
- *Involve your president.* Because we presented this as our president's survey, the envelope containing the questionnaire read Office of the President. The cover letter, signed by President Bryce Jordan, expressed his personal interest in finding out what editors thought of Penn State and its public information operation. He noted that their responses would be confidential, though the questionnaires were coded for follow-up.

Never underestimate the power of an important name. In talking to several editors since, we learned that they would not have bothered with the survey had it not come from President Jordan.—RLW

Section 2

So You Want National Media Coverage

Want National Coverage?

Planning and persistence pay

by Phil Zimmer

If you're willing to work for it, you *can* get national coverage for your institution. All it takes are clearly defined goals, a well thought-out strategy, persistence, and patience.

We know. For a long time, Chautauqua was an "also-ran" in the national media. But thanks to a well-planned campaign, we have attained extensive coverage. It has included a 10-page spread and 13 full-color photographs in the prestigious *Smithsonian* magazine, and a three-page article with 10 color photographs in *U.S. News & World Report*. We also gained two full pages in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* as well as articles in such specialty magazines as *Gourmet* and *Bon Appetit*.

Our efforts also netted substantial articles in such major metropolitan newspapers as the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Washington Star*, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, and the *Miami Herald*.

You too can achieve such results. The first step is to determine objectively which programs or courses are truly newsworthy. Base your story proposals on solid ideas, and don't ever try to hype weak concepts. How does your school stand apart from other institutions? Why are your programs unique and worthy of national news coverage? You must tussle with those questions, determine your institution's strengths, and then base your efforts on the story possibilities that emerge.

Chautauqua's uniqueness may be obvious and sound easy to sell: It's a cultural institution in a quaint village that comes to life every summer as thousands arrive to take part in our offerings in music, art, drama, philosophy, and so on. But we didn't always get much media exposure. Now, we're not only getting coverage, we're using it to communicate our efforts to move into such areas as expanded continuing education for adults.

We determined early on that Chautauqua's story could best be told through publications or sections of publications devoted to the arts, education, and travel. Nearly all our approaches focused on these.

In some cases, we used the "counter-trend" approach. My letter to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* noted, among other things, that Chautauqua is "rather rare during these 'steady-state' days in educational circles because it is bucking the national trend. Chautauqua is expanding its programs and course offerings in addition to boldly moving ahead with its extremely successful annual fund and capital renovation programs." The page-and-a-half letter further detailed the renaissance occurring here and suggested that a meeting could be arranged during President Robert R. Hesse's next trip to Washington. That letter paid off.

Your institution may not be as colorful as ours on the surface. But look deeper and you'll find your own uniqueness. For example, your institution may be well-known regionally as being extremely innovative in computer science. A professor who not only writes his own programs but actually builds computers could be the focus of several features.

A professor who builds computers is a natural story in itself, but you also might try to find a human-interest angle on the research story. For example, a story on how the computer-building efforts have led the professor's students to jobs could be interesting. With a little brainstorming, you could easily generate half a dozen story ideas to send to numerous national and perhaps international publications.

Consistently and persistently peruse the newspapers and magazines to see what their editors and writers present as significant trends and developments. Determine how you can tie in to those.

For example, *U.S. News & World Report* occasionally runs a two-page profile on interesting towns and cities. By spotting that and presenting Chautauqua as a possible future site for such an article, we obtained the first three-page profile in that section.

Once you have solid, newsworthy angles, move ahead with confidence. Be optimistic and aim high. Take the time to properly and fully package story ideas for the national and regional media, and perhaps specialty magazines.

For example, if your institution specializes in health and medicine, you should read such specialty and trade magazines as *LAB World*, *Life and Health*, and *Health Science*.

Don't overlook the importance of getting your ideas to the right person at the right time. For example, you should present story ideas on summer educational courses to monthly magazine editors at least six months ahead because of the lead time the magazines need. Monthly magazine editors need three to four months' lead time. You should approach daily newspapers at least five to six weeks before you want a story to appear.

Editors and writers (like all of us) have egos. Be sure you have their names and titles correct before writing to them with your story idea. We find that it's best to send letters with appropriate back-up material via private overnight courier rather than through the U.S. mail. It will get there earlier, and the packet will stand out from the large amount of unsolicited mail editors and writers receive daily.

Your letter should be brief in pointing out the significance of your story idea. The supporting materials should also be easy to read, yet detailed enough to support the feature idea.

Clearly state toward the end of your letter that you will call the editor on a definite date to discuss the idea. Be sure to follow through and call on that day. If the editor is tied up when you call, just leave your name and indicate that you will call again the same day.

Try to arrange it so your packet arrives on a Tuesday and then indicate you will call Thursday or Friday of that week. Avoid Mondays because they tend to be hectic days for the media.

Don't be shy about sending your ideas to widely printed free-lancers. They can often spot additional mar-

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Phil Zimmer is director of communications at Chautauqua Institution in Chautauqua, New York.

kets for good stories, and their media contacts can prove extremely beneficial. When we found out that a free-lance writer who specializes in food stories was visiting our area, we approached her in a low-key, friendly manner and helped her locate suitable housing and restaurants. Only after winning her confidence did we suggest that Chautauqua and its *Celebrity Cookbook* could prove interesting. The result: a five-page feature on Chautauqua in *Gourmet*.

In working with free-lancers, be sure that you approach them as solid, hard-working professionals (and they are!) and have your story ideas fairly well developed ahead of time. Always have another idea or two tucked away in the back of your mind in case the first suggestion falls flat. A set but flexible agenda keeps their day moving swiftly. Be willing to spend the time to draw ideas out from them, too, if the opportunity presents itself.

Above all, be optimistic and persistent. When the travel editor of the *Washington Post* turned down our idea for a story on vacationing at Chautauqua, we had a friendly discussion of story ideas. The discussion helped us refine a "travel log" idea that we later "sold" to the *Washington Star.*

Major metropolitan dailies are more difficult to crack then your hometown paper, but the extra effort could pay off handsomely. After the turndown at the *Post*, we redoubled our efforts and that persistence made the difference in getting into the *Washington Star*, a paper which was then reaching more than 340,000 influential persons in the nation's capital. The travel story presented Chautauqua's upcoming summer program, a basic but colorful description, travel information, and interesting historical details.

Another article that paid off was written by Margaret Sheridan of the *Chicago Tribune*. After appearing in Chicago, it was picked up and carried across the country by the *Tribune's* news service. The story then appeared in the *Miami Herald* and several other papers across the country.

Even if you do get turned down on a story idea, follow through with a short handwritten note thanking the editor or writer for his or her comments and suggestions. That will build goodwill and help ensure that your calls get attention next time around.

Once you do get an editor or writer interested in your idea, be gently persistent. Forward additional materials and supporting documents. Help with travel arrangements, if requested, and devote as much time and energy as required once you get that person on your campus. Reassign or drop everything, if necessary, to focus on the writer's itinerary and schedule of appointments. Take that extra step to be helpful, but be sensitive to the writer's interests and need for private interviews. Be helpful, but don't dominate.

By following these steps, you'll have a good shot at getting national publicity. Even after a turn down, remember the "Three P's"—**P**ersistence **P**ays in getting **P**ublicity.

Six Steps to More National Coverage

1. Persistently peruse national, regional, and local publications, both to spot emerging trends and to find out what kind of material the media use.

2. Develop specific story proposals for specific publications. Establish clearly defined goals. Develop solid story ideas that build on your institution's strengths. Make a case for uniqueness as well as strength.

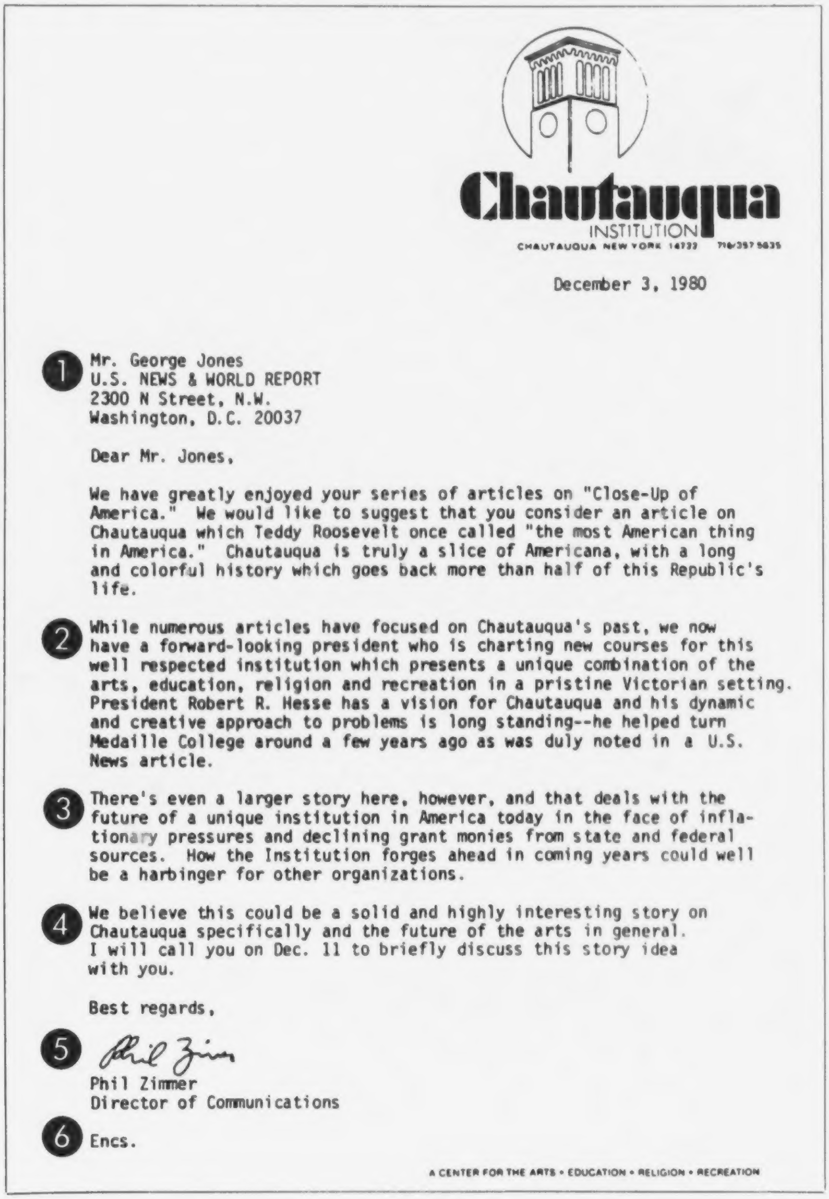
3. Plan a strategy for approaching targeted publications and contact persns, for remembering call dates, and for noting remards. Use the *Writer's Market*, too, for locating possible markets for stories.

4. Send a well-written letter that clearly states the story idea, and build a case for it using appropriate back-up material. No puffery please. Editors can smell that at 500 paces on a windless day! Send the letter and material via private overnight courier.

5. Follow through by using the telephone in an optimistic and persistent —but friendly—manner.

6. Listen to how editors and writers respond to your "bait." Determine what they are nibbling at and then work to hook them on the story idea. Get them involved in the project and rely on their professional judgement.—PZ

Six Items to Include in a Good Query Letter



Chautauqua
INSTITUTION
CHAUTAUQUA NEW YORK 14722 716/357 5635

December 3, 1980

① Mr. George Jones
U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT
2300 N Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20037

Dear Mr. Jones,

We have greatly enjoyed your series of articles on "Close-Up of America." We would like to suggest that you consider an article on Chautauqua which Teddy Roosevelt once called "the most American thing in America." Chautauqua is truly a slice of Americana, with a long and colorful history which goes back more than half of this Republic's life.

② While numerous articles have focused on Chautauqua's past, we now have a forward-looking president who is charting new courses for this well respected institution which presents a unique combination of the arts, education, religion and recreation in a pristine Victorian setting. President Robert R. Hesse has a vision for Chautauqua and his dynamic and creative approach to problems is long standing--he helped turn Medaille College around a few years ago as was duly noted in a U.S. News article.

③ There's even a larger story here, however, and that deals with the future of a unique institution in America today in the face of inflationary pressures and declining grant monies from state and federal sources. How the Institution forges ahead in coming years could well be a harbinger for other organizations.

④ We believe this could be a solid and highly interesting story on Chautauqua specifically and the future of the arts in general. I will call you on Dec. 11 to briefly discuss this story idea with you.

Best regards,

⑤ Phil Zim

Phil Zimmer
Director of Communications

⑥ Encs.

A CENTER FOR THE ARTS • EDUCATION • RELIGION • RECREATION

Adhere to the "All Editors Are Frantically Busy" School of letter-writing: Be brief. Quickly point out the significance of your idea; mail your letter to arrive on a Tuesday (the least hectic day in an editor's week); and send it via overnight courier. That way, you may actually command your editor's attention.

1. Contact the proper person and use the correct title and address.
2. Build the case for the story idea.
3. Expand on the concept and show why others would be interested.
4. State that you will call on a specific date to discuss the story idea.
5. Sign with a contrasting ink.
6. Enclose supporting materials.

Tell the Story Straight

By covering rather than covering up, Stanford gets the national media to come to it

by Karla Taylor

As Bob Beyers sees it, chasing after the national media is a waste of time—and he hates to waste time.

"I do not think that an institution is made or broken by a mention in the *New York Times* or on the 'CBS Morning News,' " says Beyers, director of the Stanford University News Service. "We're concerned about our own audiences first, not driven by trying to get a mention somewhere."

But just because Stanford doesn't chase coverage doesn't mean Stanford doesn't attract it. The news service receives 25 to 50 inquiries from the national media each week. When CURRENTS asked reporters from the national media which news services provided them with the best material, Stanford's name came up more often than any other university's.

And Beyers can rattle off dozens of anecdotes about the rewards of getting the news out—whether the news is good or bad. There was the time, for instance, when a routine news release about the invention of acoustic microscopes led to a story in *Popular Science*—and, from there, to the licensing of patents on the discovery.

And back in the early 1960s, a *Time* story picked up a professor's comment that Stanford's library was the worst at any major university in the country. Many faculty members took offense, although none disputed the fact. In the end, the report led directly to Stanford's attracting a top librarian, who enlisted the professor's help in building a better collection.

Rather than being the goal of the Stanford News Service, this sort of national media attention is the by-product of the staff's guiding principle: You don't have to go hat in hand to the media to tell your institution's story. Instead, if you tell the story and tell it straight, the media will come to you.

Superstaff

That's why, instead of tip sheets or phone calls, the news service's media relations operation relies on press releases—about 2,000 of them mailed out each year to hundreds of outlets around the world. These releases are replayed via computer for what the staff considers Stanford's main means of communication: its tabloids for faculty and staff (*Campus Report*), for its northern California neighbors (*Community Report*), and for alumni, parents, high school counselors, and friends around the world (*The Stanford Observer*).

Churning out these releases and tabloids are 13 full-time staff members: seven writers, counting Beyers, and six clerical workers.

One sign of the sheer volume of their output is the News Service's variation on Information Central: 10 four-drawer file cabinets full of bios, clips, and releases, and 12 four-drawer files of releases and background material by topic. ("Demonstrations" requires a drawer all its own.)

At the center of the news operation is Beyers. A colleague from the alumni office compares him to Perry White, the gruff, no-nonsense editor of the *Daily Planet* on the "Superman" TV show. He looks and sounds like a fast-talking, quick-thinking, old-school newsman.

Once described as "a pioneer of candor" with "more admirers than imitators," Beyers, in his 25 years at Stanford, has become famous among reporters and college PR people alike for his intense commitment to the whole truth and nothing but. That commitment never seems to waver, whether the truth concerns faculty firings, a cheating scandal, or, recently, the Stanford marching band's playful urge to spell out obscene words on the football field.

If Beyers is Perry White, Karen Bartholomew is Lois Lane: smart, organized, and a ready source of information on everything from the break-up of AT&T to the location of the missing hula hoop photos for next week's *Campus Report*. She was assistant director of the news service until last fall, when she dropped that job's administrative chores to become editor of *The Stanford Observer*.

Bartholomew speaks matter-of-factly about 60-hour weeks but reverently about Beyers: "He's very intense about his work, very dedicated. It's terrible. It's intimidating. It's inspiring."

Beyers and Bartholomew have been asked about the secrets to the news service's success so many times that they've developed a packet of speeches, articles, and annual reports on the subject to help answer the inquiries. Although at first glance their guiding principles seem to have little to do with getting national media coverage, in fact they're the foundations of good communication of worthwhile ideas. And that, after all, is what the national media are striving to do all the time.

Getting the ideas out

Beyers is fond of describing a university as "a marketplace for ideas." A news bureau's mission, as he explains it in his department's one-page operating rationale, is twofold: to tell the world of the institution's thinking and achievements, and to encourage the institution to consider both its own problems and prospects and those of education as a whole.

Or, as Bartholomew puts it, "There are many ideas at a university, and it's the university's obligation to get them out."

This philosophy stretches from the weekly *Campus Report*, the 16,000-circulation faculty-staff tabloid in which the staff works to keep administrative news from overwhelming academics, to news releases. And when it comes to those news releases, the staff strives to go beyond the routine, even in the academic arena.

On the day Leonid Brezhnev died in 1982, for example, the news service received the predictable requests for

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Karla Taylor is CURRENTS' executive editor.

experts to speculate on the Soviet leader's likely successor. "How significant is that—that you get a faculty member's name in the paper and an institutional mention?" Beyers asks. "It's very insignificant in my view."

What he does view as significant is the story behind the story—in this case, that the United States is not in a good position to understand changes in Soviet leadership because it lacks a new generation of experts on the topic. As it happened, Stanford's faculty includes members of the Slavic Studies Association who were concerned about this shortage. So within two days of Brezhnev's death, the news service had releases about the problem off to national media.

"That story got on a lot of front pages with no calls by us," Beyers says. "It's just taking ideas and broadcasting them as widely as possible to those people who might have an interest—and then seeing what happens."

Getting the story straight

"The most valuable thing that any news organization has is its credibility," Beyers says.

"It is extremely important that you be in front on stories that most people would see as quite negative. Where you get killed is where you're trailing on a negative story, because then you end up trying to undo whatever the initial image is, and quite often that first image is not accurate."

Beyers has plenty of stories that show how the truth ultimately helps, even if releasing it hurts a bit at first. For example, in 1985 Stanford was hit by the biggest cheating incident in its history when 23 students in an introductory psychology class were accused of dishonesty. In typical fashion, the news service staff immediately sent out a release recognizing the incident as Stanford's worst ever and fully disclosing the known details.

But the staff also took the story one step further. Drawing on past and present survey data from Stanford and other colleges, the release indicated that in fact, students are no more likely to cheat now than they've ever been.

"We took one hard shot and reported the whole thing in context," Beyers says. And, as a result, "we also got very good coverage from the *Christian Science Monitor* and other places."

The staff doesn't flinch from the facts even when the bad news cuts much closer. When a vice president for development resigned a few years ago, the news release cited clinical depression as the reason. "We also reviewed his record in raising funds, which was excellent," Beyers says. "He gained a lot of understanding and compassion, rather than a lot of rumors. And he needed that."

And last summer, when a news service staff member who was seriously ill killed himself, the Stanford obituary listed suicide as the cause of death. "Sure, it's hard initially," Beyers says. "But you have to face it. In the longer term, it may be helpful. You don't get anywhere by not saying it."

True, Beyers has an advantage when it comes to telling the truth. Visiting the campus, you don't get the impression that Stanford spends much time covering up what others might see as scandalous. For example, when Stanford alumni gaze out the front of the Bowman Alumni House, the first thing they see is a sign proclaiming the building across the street as the home of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance.

The university's high-level commitment to full disclosure dates to 1946, when Stanford President Donald Tresidder was badly burned by public disclosure of private correspondence he had written as head of Yosemite Park & Curry Co. When Tresidder turned to a newspaper editor, Frederic O. Glover, for help establishing the Stanford News Service, Glover insisted on a policy of openness. Tresidder felt some trepidation but concluded that "Glover will best serve the university by serving the press in helping them obtain quickly and accurately whatever news of consequence there may be about Stanford."

"That kind of editorial freedom can come only with the support or at least the tolerance of those at the top," Beyers acknowledged in a speech last year at Cornell University. "But it's the first ingredient of an effective communications program."

Beyers has standard advice for PR people who complain that their presidents would never let them trumpet bad news: Quit.

Being professional

At Stanford, this means hiring writers —journalists—with strong news judgment. It also means treating them and paying them like professionals so that they'll want to stay.

A current example is the news service's science writer, Joel Shurkin, who shared the 1980 Pulitzer Prize for general local reporting for his coverage of Three Mile Island at the *Philadelphia Inquirer.* One recent payoff from this investment in professional quality: Last June a Shurkin story about artificial intelligence got a full page in the *San Francisco Examiner,* complete with Shurkin's byline and a credit for the *Stanford Observer,* the alumni tabloid, which had published it first.

As Beyers sees it, spending money for quality reporters up front means saving money and time later. By writing the news right the first time, staff members can quickly repackage the material for its many audiences without a lot of editing.

This method also lets the staff fulfill what Beyers considers the news service's main mission: to communicate with its most important audiences first. As far as he's concerned, getting out the news—good and bad—to faculty, staff, alumni, and neighbors is the important thing. They need the facts about Stanford at least as much as the readers of *Newsweek* do, he says.

What's not worth doing

Ideas, credibility, and professionalism are the three main things a successful media operation needs, Beyers and his staff say. Their list of what it doesn't need is much longer.

1. *It doesn't need to cultivate coverage.* The value of mailing out news releases rather than spending hours on the phone courting reporters is that it's cheaper, faster, and, Bartholomew believes, more pleasing for the reporters. "Reporters want to hear what's going on, but they don't want us to bug them," she says.

Better to let the reporters select the news that appeals to them—and to let the news service staff spend its time writing and getting out publications for its own audiences.

2. *It doesn't need to waste time and creativity putting the university's own slant on what's happening—or putting off reporters.* "A university will pay a high price if it chooses to remain silent rather than explain the rationale for its findings and decisions," Beyers has said. "It will pay an even higher price if it is perceived as putting a pub-

lic relations spin on its information.

"Despite the promises offered in the name of PR for greater institutional visibility or specific story plants, the candid, open style of public information has major, long-term benefits, both in news and in direct returns to the university."

Beyers cites the way the news service's fast, matter-of-fact coverage of the cheating scandal yielded a flattering editorial in the *San Francisco Chronicle.* The editorial said in part, "It is to Stanford's credit that the university moved immediately to look into the matter. What's more, Stanford itself informed the outside world that the problem existed; there was no attempt to hide what could have been an embarrassing situation."

3. *It doesn't need to count on the media to do its job for it.* "If you want something to work long term, don't make yourself fundamentally dependent on what outsiders say," Beyers says. By taking the initiative in putting out ideas, you get people to respond to you on your own terms.

To illustrate how unpredictable media coverage can be, Beyers likes to tell of the routine news release about a paper airplane contest to which the Sunday *New York Times* awarded three-fourths of a column. Better, he says, for his staff members to use their own periodicals to put out the news they feel Stanford audiences really need and leave second-guessing the media to someone else.

4. *It doesn't need a special division to handle broadcasters.* Beyers readily admits that the news service is print-oriented. But he also believes most broadcast news is derived from print.

He doesn't think the staff's print orientation hurts the news service's ability to work with television and radio. Again, as he sees it, reporters are interested in ideas. Once the news service delivers an idea through a news release, the reporters will evaluate it and figure out for themselves what to do with it—whether in print or over the airwaves.

5. *It doesn't need different people in different departments reporting the same stories.* As Bartholomew says, "I think that the mindset in a lot of places is that you've got one staff trying to get mentions in the media for status purposes or whatever and another office for putting out the faculty-staff newspaper.

"Here we say, 'Here are all these ideas to get out and cover' "—ideas that go out first as releases and then are recycled into the tabloids as appropriate. "I think the secret to our success is in having the same staff do the news releases and the faculty-staff newspaper and the *Observer.*"

No one could accuse Beyers of being extravagant with extras or an empire-builder. He makes clear his strong feeling that such luxuries as four-color printing should be used sparingly. As far as he's concerned, newsprint is the ideal paper stock for news.

He's also determined to keep staff size to a minimum. When the staff member killed himself last summer, one of the first points Beyers brought up afterward was whether the news service could possibly eliminate the position altogether. (It didn't, however.) The news service's budget is $778,000, including salaries for the 13 staff members and a three-person photo staff, as well as some overhead, supplies, and equipment for the news and publications operations.

Beyers sums up his philosophy about the role of the news service in his story about Sir Eric Ashby, an English educational administrator. Supposedly Ashby once said that when he looked in the mirror each morning, he'd think to himself, "As an administrator, I am evil. The only question is, am I a *necessary* evil?"

Nevertheless . . .

Even Beyers would admit that, far from being an unnecessary evil, good communication is vital to an institution's success. True, he insists, "Stanford exists for its faculty and students. . . . Without faculty ideas, nothing would happen.

"But without strong channels of communication, there would not be payoffs for the university."

Not only that, Bartholomew acknowledges, "When you get into the *New York Times*, you reach the country's decision makers, high-level business and government leaders. When [Stanford President] Don Kennedy talks about the effects of government cutbacks on research and it gets into the major newspapers, it can have a great effect on higher education."

And even mighty Stanford has its problems. Despite the university's strong reputation for academics, "there's some concern that Stanford students aren't as serious," Bartholomew says. Media coverage of outstanding students and faculty helps balance that perception.

And that's why, like every other good media relations team, the news service staff drops everything to help reporters when they call—and especially the ones from the highly influential national media. The staff members simply make a point of keeping their sights on the ends of their work—more and better information—rather than the means of conveying it.

As Beyers put it in his speech at Cornell, "In my view, the job of a college publicist is not to project a highly polished image, to beg for space in a newsweekly, to solicit network TV time, or to rattle a tin cup. . . .

"Stripped to the barest essentials, it is trying to convey the ideas of the faculty to a broader world—simply, directly, and candidly, starting with those audiences closest to campus. It's story after story after story—literally hundreds a year."

Expert Advice

Yes, we know, it's irresistible. When you read about the *New York Times*, *Newsweek*, and "Nightline" calling Bob Beyers and his news service staff, it's hard not to sputter, "How can they *not* get that kind of attention? They're Stanford!"

And of course it's true. Having nine Nobel Prize-winners on your faculty, as well as nationally known schools of medicine and business, tends to command attention. "We are lucky that Stanford is the kind of institution it is," admits Karen Bartholomew, the news service's assistant director until last autumn. "People are always wanting to hear what's going on here."

Predictably, however, both she and Beyers insist that other institutions could be successful, too, if they made a similar commitment to disseminating ideas, to telling the news straight, and to hiring the best staff to get the news out. Here's their advice for winning coverage in the national media.

- *Sharpen your news judgment.* No matter how small, every institution has faculty experts on topics you can tie into the day's news—from pornography (a hot topic after the release of the Meese Commission's report last summer) to immigration (a natural tie-in with the Statue of Liberty celebration).

"You just have to know your faculty," Bartholomew says. News service staff members try to spend as much time as they can outside the office learning what the faculty is doing. A valuable by-product of this: Faculty and administrators get to know the staff and will return their calls promptly.

"True, you may not get into the *New York Times*," Bartholomew says. "But you'll be able to get into the local papers, and that's important."

- *Concentrate on what's really newsworthy.* Beyers maintains that the sources of news fall into a definite hierarchy, with faculty at the top, students next, and administrators and their official announcements at the bottom. Accordingly, whether the medium is *Campus Report* or the *Washington Post*, the news service staff resists pressure to highlight relatively insignificant administrative news at the expense of academics and substantive issues.

For example, instead of covering a ribbon-cutting for a new chemistry building, the staff would look for the news behind the news. Was the building constructed because of a growing need for chemists nationwide? Was it built in record time because of innovative construction or motivational techniques? Are the students who'll attend class in that building doing something that makes an important contribution?

- *Make it easy for reporters to do their own work.* The news service staff lists sources' phone numbers at the bottom of all releases so the reporters can dial direct. In addition, the staff resists setting up schedules for visiting reporters unless the reporters request specific help. "Over and over again we've set up schedules, and they get changed," Beyers says. "We don't want to be using large amounts of time playing appointment secretary to reporters."

- *Refer reporters to off-campus sources.* This idea springs from Beyers' conviction that a university should be a marketplace for ideas. By looking beyond the boundaries of your own institution, you help to broaden the scope of media coverage—and prove that you don't take a parochial or self-serving view of the news. This, in turn, enhances your reputation for credibility. Besides, Beyers says, "If reporters get what they need from us, they'll be back."

- *Keep your priorities straight.* Above all, Beyers says, don't confuse serving your institution by putting out the news with putting out self-serving news.

"Among news people—college journalists or hacks or whatever you want to call them—there is too much institutional loyalty and not enough journalistic professionalism," he says. "And the journalistic approach will usually serve the long-term interests of the institution better."

After all, "If colleges aren't credible, who is?" —KT

Know the Media

A Texas medical school's PR team proves that it helps to know what makes the media tick

by Nancy Raley

It was the night before a potentially major event for the University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas. Rumor had it that two of its professors, nicknamed "the Gold Dust Twins" or simply "G&B," were about to win the 1985 Nobel prize in medicine.

Bob Fenley, the center's medical information director, set a couple of alarm clocks for 4:30 a.m. An old police reporter, Fenley had prevailed upon some friends on the late-night "dog beats" at the wire services to phone him when the news broke—no matter who won.

A little after 5 a.m., a call came from one of his stakeouts. "It's just hit the monitor," the reporter said. "Dr. Joseph Goldstein was awarded the Nobel prize in Medicine. . . ."

Silence. What about the other professor, Fenley thought, panicking. What would happen if only *one* of them won the prize?

"Read it again," Fenley pleaded. "Are you sure it's only Goldstein?"

Sweet relief. "Oh, yeah, here it is,"

said the reporter. "Drs. Joseph Goldstein and Michael Brown were awarded the Nobel prize. . . ."

Fenley remembers with awe the Nobel story and the monumental media coverage that followed. Things went well despite major complications—the winners' being besieged at a meeting in a Boston hotel, a hastily called news conference at 5 p.m. (the *worst* time), and the media-shy Twins saying no to interviews from "CBS Evening News" and ABC-TV's "Good Morning America." Clippings poured in from all over the world. The center took a giant leap into name visibility.

But, as Fenley is quick to point out, the international media coverage wasn't due to the efforts of his PR staff alone. "It was one of those happy circumstances that illustrated the quality of the institution," he says.

His point, of course, is that no matter how talented or well-budgeted a campus PR office is, it cannot communicate the high quality of an institution if the quality's not there. A public medical school affiliated with a 900-bed hospital, a 100-bed pediatric hospital, and other medical institutions, the health science center is renowned for its departments of medicine and its faculty experts in cholesterol, heart disease, and cancer.

Even so, you have to know how to make the most of your opportunities—such as Nobel prizes—when they come. That's where Fenley's office comes in. By understanding reporters' needs and devising solid, nuts-and-bolts programs to meet them, Fenley and his staff have done much to enhance the center's strong reputation.

The voice of experience

Fenley understands journalists because he's been one. In his Oklahoma drawl, he recalls his 17-year career as a reporter for such papers as the *Dallas Times Herald* and as a stringer for *Time*, the *London Daily Mirror*, and *Der Stern*. "I always had an interest in science and liked covering it," he says. At the *Times Herald*, his beat was science, aerospace, astronomy, and aviation. He helped cover Hurricane Carla and John Glenn's space flight as well as such big news stories as the Kennedy assassination, the Oswald killing, and the Ruby trial.

"I had the advantage of knowing what I liked and what helped me the most from PR people when I was a reporter," he says. "When you're slapping stories together in minutes, you begin to value speed. I've tried to carry through my ideas in my relations with the media."

Obviously, the better you know media people, the better you know how to approach them, especially with sensitive news. Referring to one local reporter, Fenley says, "I know her well enough to know that she would not maliciously damage us and that she has an honest approach."

But there are, of course, reporters whom you "sense are out for a Q and D [quick and dirty]—usually not regular beat reporters. It makes a difference in how we deal with them sometimes," he says.

He admits that things don't go smoothly every time. "But we always come back to say, 'OK, we're both professionals. Your interests are our interests'—so we remain friends. They're our kind of folks."

Covering the territory

Fenley's long-time second in command, Assistant Director Ann Harrell, echoes his views about the importance of understanding the media. Because reporters are a special breed, she thinks you really have to like them and what they do for a living to get along with them. "The more you like a media person, the easier your job's going to be," she maintains.

Although Harrell did a short stint at the Amarillo *Daily-News*, she gained her knowledge of the Dallas media as PR director of the Dallas YMCA. That one-person shop forced her to make good local media contacts. In fact, a *Dallas Morning News* city editor once laughingly called her "Letter-a-Day-from-the-YMCA Harrell" because of the many query letters she sent. The results were good, apparently; Harrell says other agencies complained to the paper about the YMCA's share of coverage. She left the YMCA to come to the center 13 years ago.

Although Fenley has nine staff members, their duties cover lots of territory. The staff includes six writers who field media calls and produce news stories, bulletins, and brochures. All do a great deal of the media relations work.

To keep the office on target, Fenley has a six-year PR plan that spells out goals, objectives, and activities. Besides sending out hundreds of news releases, staffers produce a daily consumer-oriented radio show, a monthly cable TV program, an annual research magazine, a tabloid, a newsletter, the institution's three directories, exhibits, forums, and tours. All of this is done with a yearly budget of less than $400,000—one-fifth of 1 percent of the center's total budget.

As a team, Fenley and Harrell complement each other in many ways. He's low-key and good-natured; she's gregarious and a bit of a cynic. Fenley admits he's not always organized; Harrell seems to relish juggling 50 balls at once. Creative Fenley loves to come up with story concepts; practical Harrell takes pride in keeping track of faculty specialties and media names.

They don't mind disagreeing, but it's clear that each respects the other. Fenley admires Harrell's people skills and productivity. About Fenley, Harrell says, "He's not political, which is a plus. He lets us try new approaches." She also feels that his emphasis on strong story leads keeps the staff's writing "down-to-earth."

Whatever you attribute it to, the staff chemistry works—as evidenced by the many local and national awards displayed in the PR office lobby. The group has won more than 100 regional and national awards from such organizations as CASE (both national and district), the Association of American Medical Colleges, and the International Association of Business Communicators. The awards have recognized the staff's news program, writing, internal newspaper, and radio show.

The other side

Reporters have good things to say about Fenley, Harrell, and their staff, too. Former *Dallas Morning News* medical writer Joanne Schulte, who worked closely with Harrell, says: "She delivers. She makes even the obnoxious doctors cooperate with us." Schulte has also appreciated Harrell's willingness to handle media questions after hours, suggest news sources at other medical institutions, and manage TV reporters at news conferences.

Nancy Raley, formerly associate editor of CURRENTS, is now vice president of institutional relations and publications at CASE.

Sarah Peterson, regional bureau chief of *U.S. News & World Report*, applauds the center's PR staff for its ability to prepare interviewees well. "They know how we're going to use the information in a roundup story—not necessarily in a story strictly about the center," she says. So the people interviewed aren't disappointed later.

Although Peterson says she seldom, if ever, uses the wording of center releases, she likes them because they're brief, to the point, and topical. Also, "They steer away from cutesy headlines and leads."

Dallas TV reporter Dennis Johnson, who's covered his beat for seven years, remembers that Fenley was one of the first people he met in Dallas. He gives the center's PR staff high marks for honesty—even when the news is delicate. "They've told us about sensitive stories before they broke."

How they market

Harrell gives some of the credit for the center's national visibility to "plain ol' doggy-digging out." She and Fenley are the major media marketers. Much of their work involves hunting for new sources, developing good media lists, and keeping these lists up-to-date. The staff also uses the telephone a lot to touch base with media, query them, and pitch stories.

"Our list is broad," Harrell says. "It consists of medical writers, science writers, columnists, magazines, consumer publications, and so on. I'm looking all the time for possible placement of stories and then deciding which groups are the proper ones to receive releases."

The staff also cultivates free-lancers (many Dallas-based) who do local, regional, and national stories. As Harrell points out, national media aren't just the *New York Times* or NBC's "Today Show." They're also the specialty media like *Medical World News, Discover*, and Cable News Network. Often, she says, although these media have smaller audiences and are less well-known, they set the agenda for the mass media. And the publics the center wants to reach tend to read, view, or listen to these media.

Because of budget constraints and Texas' restriction on out-of-state travel for employees of public institutions, Fenley and Harrell visit media only when they're in a city on other business. But they keep tabs on the media market through surveys. Every two years, they send questionnaires about the effectiveness of their news releases to those on their media list. In 1985, 27 percent of the 1,500 reporters who received questionnaires responded. Fifty-three percent of the respondents said they used releases as stories or as idea starters; 42 percent used background information from the institution; and 42 percent filed releases for future use. Only 9 percent didn't want to continue to receive the releases.

Speaking of releases

Interestingly, the center's PR staff has achieved its national media success without such popular PR tools as tip sheets or print and video services (although they're considering adding these). The office has also just recently computerized.

From the results of their surveys, however, it's clear that what Fenley's staff does well—releases—has earned it high respect. "Our news releases *are* our credibility," says Harrell.

She says releases are especially crucial for a medical institution because they present the scientist's view in words he or she approves. And releases offer complex information in a form the journalist can understand. Says Fenley, "We try in our news releases to bridge the gap [between scientist and journalist] as much as possible."

He notes that most of the center's releases are features. "We don't have hard news to report that often, so we make it sharp, attractive, accurate. If you do this, you're going to generate more coverage."

Fenley recalls the time when one of his writers, an avid fan of old books, mentioned that many illustrations in old medical books looked like today's Nautilus equipment. Fenley recognized the feature angle and suggested a story comparing the new exercise equipment with the old. The result was a whimsical release quoting, among other things, an old doctor's recommendations for exercise ("yawn and stretch"). According to Fenley, an "astonishing" number of national media—including the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post*—ran stories based on the release. Combining brainstorms like this with hard work, the center sent out approximately 150 releases in 1985.

With so many campus PR professionals these days questioning the effectiveness of releases, why does the center remain faithful to them?

Fenley explains. "Let's say we're not going to do any more news releases—we're going to make phone calls. I phone a local medical reporter to promote a story on a cholesterol study. She may do it. That story will hit the local paper and it may or may not go anywhere else."

He prefers a different scenerio: A center staffer writes a news release and calls a few reporters to alert them about the story so that each can take a crack at it. "They may do stories. Then the release will go out to TV, be picked up by the wires, and be sent to some of the 1,500 addresses we have on our media mailing list. Then it may be picked up in medical columns." (Fenley says one medical advice columnist even frames questions just so he can use center releases as answers.)

"Instead of getting one bang in one medium, we get sort of a skyrocket burst."

Tips on National Coverage

Many of Bob Fenley and Ann Harrell's techniques for winning national media exposure would work well for other institutions, including ones with small PR shops. They offer this advice:

1. *Sharpen your nose for news.* Says Fenley: "Obviously, to get national media coverage, you have to have a good story." Look for these ingredients in particular:

- Human interest: For instance, when Fenley and Harrell set up a news conference to announce a diabetes study, they included a family with a diabetic member for the media to interview.
- The unusual: Fenley recalls the time he was scanning a research story destined for the *Center Times*, the institution's internal newsletter. Suddenly he realized that what he was reading was revolutionary: The researcher was saying that olive oil was more healthful than safflower oil. Because Fenley couldn't believe his eyes, he checked with the writer and then looked at the research itself. There was no mistake. He then phoned the *New York Times'* Jane Brody, a nationally recognized health reporter, who eventually did a story.

2. *Spend some of your small budget on good source materials to use in marketing news stories.* Among Harrell's "musts" is *Bacon's Publicity Checker.* She says you should also keep up with current magazines and journals. In the health field, specialty publications like the *New England Journal of Medicine, Science,* and *Nature* are vital.

And subscribe to publications that will acquaint you with the names of major writers and their interests. For example, "*PR Aids* is invaluable," says Harrell, "because it tells me what national free-lancers and columnists are looking for—specific information on what subjects they're writing about. They're saying, 'Please send material to help me put my story together.' "

3. *Write bright, whimsical features.* According to Fenley, these may provide the most effective route to national visibility for the small liberal arts institution. You don't have to write one daily, weekly, or even monthly. Just keep your eyes and ears open and ask yourself: What does everyone do? Is there something funny about it?

"Writers are observers—mirrors of what's going on," says Fenley. "You must have the ability to question everything—to try for a fresh view." To bring attention to the feature, enclose a cartoon or graphic.

4. *Do topical stories.* Tie stories to the season, holidays, and news events. For instance, during the summer of 1980, the hottest on record in Dallas, the center's PR staff waged a campaign to inform the Dallas area public about heat stroke, heat exposure, and methods of avoiding both. The National Institutes of Health referred national media to the center's PR staff, which led to more national visibility. The campaign also won the center a CASE grand award.

5. *Encourage faculty and administrative news sources to cooperate with media.* The key, says Fenley, is to convince faculty members that by taking time to talk to reporters, "they are advancing the institution's interests."

Harrell recalls a time when the faculty was leery of talking to broadcast media. It took only six months to turn the situation around. The solution: The center's president thanked each faculty member by personal letter after each broadcast interview. —NR

Target Your Media Marketing

Why Wittenberg's Don Perkins stays on the phone and on the road

by Mary Wade Atteberry

When two Wittenberg University professors turned up on NBC-TV's "Today" show and ABC-TV's "Good Morning America," it wasn't just a stroke of luck for the private Ohio college.

The exposure was due in large part to the careful media relations efforts of Wittenberg's director of public information, Donald R. Perkins.

Perkins' approach to national media, born of 16 years at Wittenberg, is simple and aggressive: He concentrates his national efforts on newspapers, magazines, and radio and TV stations that will heighten his institution's visibility in the vital areas of student recruitment and fund raising. The purpose is to help create a climate in which admissions and advancement programs can be successful.

"We don't shotgun things indiscriminately," says Perkins, whose annual budget of slightly more than $100,000, including salaries, is modest compared to those at larger institutions. "Instead, we often target special national markets that we think will be interested in what our faculty, students, and president are doing."

Planning for a payoff

The two network TV appearances provide a textbook case on how, despite budget constraints, Perkins makes the most of Wittenberg news that's worthy of national coverage.

Both appearances resulted from Perkins' help in promoting a 1985 book, *If She Is Raped,* which deals with how men can help friends who are raped. Perkins wanted to set up interviews for the authors, professors Alan W. Mc-

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Mary Wade Atteberry is a reporter with the Indianapolis Star *in Indiana.*

Evoy and Jeffrey B. Brookings, in various key Wittenberg markets. "A half-page feature story in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* might be great, but if our fund raisers and admissions people are working in Rochester and Buffalo, I've failed," he says.

Through planning, Perkins was able to lay the groundwork for what turned out to be major media exposure for the authors as well as for Wittenberg. And he did it with no initial budget for the project.

How? "We showed Mike [Ferin, Wittenberg's vice president for university advancement] that it would significantly impact the areas the fund-raising and admissions staffs were trying to reach," he says. With the promise of that attractive payoff, the university found money for the project.

To save money, Perkins booked the professors on People Express airlines. "In some towns we got alumni to help us transport them—pick them up at the airport and get them where they needed to go," he says.

While laying the groundwork for national publicity, Perkins was also carefully grooming McEvoy and Brookings. He arranged local and regional interviews before working up to the bigger print, radio, and TV markets in the East. The local and regional markets he targeted were, of course, all in cities such as Chicago, New York, Boston, and Washington, which are most important to Wittenberg's enrollment and fund-raising efforts.

By taking this approach, Perkins was able to build a case for the authors' media appeal. He showed the larger TV stations that the two were not only gaining prominence in the news but were also experienced on-camera.

In all, the men submitted to more than 200 interviews, including major newspapers and radio and TV stations in 15 cities.

Perkins advises public relations directors to be alert to the possibility of getting media relations help from organizations to which their institutions belong. For instance, a PR firm under contract with the Lutheran Church helped schedule many of McEvoy and Brookings' media interviews at no cost to Wittenberg.

The personal touch

Perkins credits his two professional associates (one of whom also handles sports information) and two secretaries with allowing him the time to make a dent in the formidable national media market. Because he can count on the staff to "keep things running smoothly," he's often able to specialize.

Perkins' brand of personal, carefully planned national PR has paid off. He uses releases sparingly and the phone and his feet relentlessly.

For example, because Wittenberg is affiliated with the Lutheran Church, one of its special national markets is the readership of the *Lutheran,* the magazine published by the Lutheran Church in America. Perkins' close contact with the editors of this national publication played a role in achieving a cover story on Wittenberg President William A. Kinnison.

President Kinnison has also provided other opportunities for coverage. Years ago, for instance, Perkins phoned *New York Times* Education Editor Edward "Ted" Fiske, with no prior introduction, to arrange a get-acquainted lunch between Fiske and Kinnison. It was during that lunch and another meeting in Chicago that Kinnison established a good rapport with Fiske. An expert on student recruitment and demographics, Kinnison often sends Fiske his speeches and other writing on those subjects. And Fiske knows he can call Kinnison whenever he needs information.

Such media cultivation and exposure, coupled with Kinnison's service with national education groups, has resulted in his being sought by media as an authority on managing private colleges, student recruiting, and other topics.

In addition, several respected publications, including *U.S. News and World Report* and Ted Fiske's *Selective Guide to Colleges,* have rated Wittenberg as one of the leading private colleges in the United States. Although Perkins is the first to point out that Wittenberg's quality as an institution and its excellent leadership play a key role in such recognition, his media relations planning and contacts are no doubt also a factor.

For example, Perkins regularly sends information to selected national media about his faculty experts, and he also makes phone calls when news arises on which the experts can comment. He runs a national op-ed program aimed at newspapers in prime recruiting and fund-raising areas. And a special information packet he developed about Kinnison keeps media informed about the president's views and opinions on higher education.

A member of the CASE board of trustees and a past chair of the CASE Summer Institute in Communications, Perkins has won recognition for his PR program from CASE and other national PR organizations.

The bottom line, however, is that the efforts of Perkins' small office, along with solid programs in admissions and fund raising, have reaped big rewards for the college in the two areas he counts most. While some private colleges have suffered from shrinking student populations, Wittenberg has maintained a steady enrollment of about 2,200 each year. What's more, the university raised $20 million in a recent three-year capital campaign —$3.5 million over the goal.

Presidential PR

But success of this magnitude doesn't happen without support from the top. Perkins believes that a president must be the institution's chief PR officer.

Michael Ferin, Perkins' boss, shares that view. "The most important ingredient any president needs—and President Kinnison has it—is the willingness to be heavily involved in the advancement area," Ferin says.

Fortunately for Perkins, Kinnison wants to maintain a high profile, to be accessible, and to be forthright with the media—national, regional, and local. But what would Perkins do if his president were wary of exposure?

"Take advantage of the strengths and circumvent weaknesses," he says. "For example, if I had a president who didn't work well with radio and television, I would stay away from those."

Accordingly, Perkins feels it's essential to earn the confidence and respect of the person at the top. He or she, in turn, will feel comfortable in dealing with the media with the support of the PR staff.

After all, "if you haven't done well or planned well, what right have you to demand his or her time?" Perkins says. "Every chance you have to work with your president, your grade should be A—not A-minus.

"You have to convince the president that you can be valuable. Then you have to deliver."

Secrets to Success

Here are Don Perkins' hints on achieving national visibility:

- *Stay on top of campus news.* To monitor the president, faculty, students, and special events, Perkins talks to professors and attends faculty meetings. Because about 35 of Wittenberg's 147 professors are potential newsmakers, he pays special attention to them. He also attends the president's executive staff meetings and monitors student activities through the many campus groups. "You have to know your product and your market—and you have to give story ideas to media in a timely fashion," he notes.
- *Hone your news sense.* "You can't bother media with just any kind of news," Perkins points out. If what you try to market to the national media isn't newsworthy to begin with, you won't get coverage—and you may damage your connections.
- *Know how to secure enterprise money—funds not in the regular budget.* As Perkins proved when he was promoting *If She Is Raped* and its two faculty authors, such unexpected resources can be critical to media relations success. "When you get an idea, know how to marshal support," he advises. "Document your need. Then do a marketing job with your superiors. Show them how your work will help enrollment and fund raising. And document your case as well as when you plan your yearly budget."
- *Believe in your institution and convey your excitement.* That's the heart of the matter, Perkins believes. "The extent to which you'll succeed in interpreting your institution depends upon the true excitement you feel in interpreting your work."

Good national media relations are within any institution's reach, Perkins says. You simply have to "beat your competition, work harder, have a more talented staff, and have a better product." —MWA

Different League, Same Game

How an independent school attracts national media attention

by Kim Robert Nilsen

A friend of mine, in New York on business, reaches for the TV"off" switch in his hotel room. As he does, he sees a Northfield Mount Hermon School banner hanging behind Caleb Daniloff (son of journalist Nicholas Daniloff) at a national press conference held at the school. My friend calls to say he saw the "scoop." I tell him the 30 seconds of film he saw is from one of three national press conferences NMH has staged in the last three weeks.

Obtaining national media coverage may not be a priority for all institutions. But it is for NMH, an independent school of 1,200 students in grades nine through 12 in Northfield, Massachusetts. Since our students and donors come from all over, we want the school to be recognized as one of the most progressive forces in secondary education in the Northeast and, frankly, in the United States.

To me, national coverage is essential to that end. In the 18 months I've been in the communications office at NMH, I've started several programs that have paid off. Here's what I've learned that may help you:

1. *Cultivate stringers.* Although northwestern Massachusetts is hardly a media hub, several local conduits to the national press are just over an hour away in Springfield. They include newspaper and radio offices for AP and UPI; stringers for the *Boston Globe* and Long Island's *Newsday*; and television stations WWLP and WGGB, which can feed local and regional TV news clips to the networks from Springfield.

We've used these means to place NMH human interest, feature, and hard news stories on prime-time news in television syndication and in major periodicals.

For example, last year I suggested that several regional reporters cover NMH's Bemis-Forslund Pie Race, the country's oldest continuously held footrace—and they did. I also asked the reporter from WWLP, an NBC affiliate, if he would feed footage on the event to NBC and Cable News Network. NBC's Linda Ellerbee talked for a minute about the race, and CNN ran the feature several times the next day.

2. *Follow national headlines.* When news breaks, you may be able to piggyback one of your institution's programs on the hot story. For example:

- When the Reagan administration called for an all-out war on drugs, I called *Time, Newsweek*, and other publications about NMH's innovative drug and alcohol abuse program. *Newsweek* sent a reporter who spent all day on campus. I'm crossing my fingers, waiting for *Newsweek* to find the right time for the story.
- As South Africa's nightmare worsened, NMH beefed up its Independent Schools South African Education Program, which has been in place for five years. So I contacted the *Christian Science Monitor*, which assigned a reporter to write a large feature. Then the *Boston Globe* and *Education Week* followed suit. The snowball effect extended to Boston's WBZ-TV, an NBC affiliate and the second largest station in New England. A two-minute spot end-

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ed with a 15-second sign-off under NMH's colorful campus sign.

- When *U.S. News'* Moscow correspondent Nicholas Daniloff, whose son, Caleb, attends NMH, was arrested, my assistant and I created a crisis center of sorts. This resulted in a national news conference at Boston's Logan International Airport and two major conferences on campus, where the media could get firsthand information from a family member. We also played a role in a fourth conference in Boston, where Caleb was filmed reacting to news of his father's release and arrival home. At one point we had five network and affiliate helicopters on the football field and satellite-feed trucks on the campus roads.

3. *Sell human interest story ideas.* The media know that people are interested in people. *Yankee* magazine, with a circulation of 1 million, and *Private Pilot* both picked up a story about a campus locksmith whose passion is building experimental aircraft.

More recently, I talked with the *Providence Journal* in Rhode Island about the harrowing real-life story of a former NMH student from Cambodia. That conversation led me to ABC-TV in New York City, which wanted to do a TV movie about the young man. I've offered the campus as a setting for the movie, and the network is negotiating with the family. In the meantime, I'm working with a contact at the *Boston Globe* in hopes of landing the story in the *Boston Globe Magazine.*

4. *Use a consultant for special projects.* If you pick your projects carefully, the money you spend on outside expertise may well pay off. For example, I spent $500 to hire a media consultant to place our South African studies story with the *Christian Science Monitor.* When it came out, an alumnus and an independent businessman each gave the program $6,000. What's more, UPI, AP, and regional TV are still picking up the story.

5. *Sell a successful story more than once.* Pack journalism lives. The story about the locksmith-airplane builder, for example, has appeared six times. To spur attention, I sent the best clip I have—in a professional folder with a cover letter and self-addressed, stamped envelope—to half-a-dozen aviation publications and four TV affiliates. I rarely miss with this approach.

6. *Never forget that the media need stories.* Don't lose sight of this fact—but also remember that you can't sell just anything. Look at the best stories in the best magazines and papers and see if anything on your campus matches what's currently running. I have little trouble selling NMH's version of these stories.

And now, the assignment editors ask *me* if anything of interest is going on.

Get the Word Out

The University of Wisconsin-Madison lets the news speak for itself

by Robin Goldman

Newsweek reporters had any number of good reasons to call the University of Wisconsin-Madison for help with a story in October 1986.

To begin with, *Newsweek* always gets quick, dependable responses from UW-Madison. Last year, in fact, *Newsweek* reporter John McCormick dropped News Service Director Linda Weimer a thank-you note for her staff's "repeated fine work."

Second, since the magazine already had a reporter in Boston to research this story, Madison could yield a balancing Midwestern perspective. "Newsmagazines are very conscious of geography," says Mary Ellen Bell, a UW-Madison newswriter.

And then there was the matter of photos to go with the article. *Newsweek* had worked before with photographer Michael Kienitz, now on the UW staff. Surely he'd be able to help.

But the deciding factor may well have been the story's topic: students' efforts to sidestep drinking-age laws. For whatever reason, when "Campus Drinking Blues" appeared in the November 3 *Newsweek*, UW-Madison was one of 10 institutions it cited. And two color photos by Kienitz topped the page—one captioned "legal boozing at a Wisconsin fraternity house," another showing a Madison police officer sorting through a pile of fake ID's.

UW has grown to expect this sort of attention. "Madison has a certain national reputation—liberal, politically active, a big party school," explains Weimer. "When the media do national stories on student trends, they call us.

"There's nothing wrong with that, but it can be frustrating. We're the third-largest research university in the country, but the media don't always think of us that way."

Still, whether the topic is drinking or thinking, UW-Madison always responds—with sources, statistics, photographs. Of course, responsiveness is simply good business: If national reporters get help when they call on one topic, they're likely to call back. But to the people at UW-Madison, the reason's even simpler. As Weimer says, "I think all our staff members feel it's part of our mission."

Art Hove, director of the Public Information Office, which includes the news service, agrees. "When the press comes around, we don't say, 'None of your business.' We say, 'We'll get the information to you as soon as we can.' That's the Wisconsin tradition."

Strength of character

Feature treatment in "Campus Drinking Blues" is hardly the kind of national coverage some institutions would want to cultivate. At Wisconsin, however, there was no doubt that the news service would respond to *Newsweek*'s query—and not just for the sake of getting its name in the magazine.

"This sort of story is a good thing if it focuses attention on the problem," says Weimer. The question of whether to link UW-Madison with such an issue never arose. "It's not negative," she says. "It's a fact of life that students drink. It would be silly to say the problem doesn't exist."

Indeed, *Newsweek*'s query prompted the news service to run an article

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Robin Goldman is CURRENTS' associate editor.

on the same subject in the campus newspaper the same week. But then, Weimer reflects, "We're very open about our problems."

That openness is simply another facet of the Wisconsin tradition. In fact, nearly all the activity of UW's public information office mirrors the well-defined character of the institution, a 45,000-student public university known for its individualism and egalitarianism as well as for its research, academics, and athletics.

For example, the news service's open attitude stems in part from the university's public affiliation—not to mention its location in the state capital, under the gaze of the Wisconsin legislature and attendant journalists. "We're used to people looking over our shoulder," Weimer says.

As for individualism, UW-Madison's total public information operation is spread out over more than half-a-dozen independent offices. (The news service staff covers more than half of the university.) "When I describe our decentralized organization to people at other institutions, they roll their eyes —many of them don't want anything going out of their university they don't see," says Hove.

And the egalitarian tradition shows in the news service's general responsiveness. When someone calls, Weimer says, "It doesn't matter if it's a local reporter or a faculty member or a student. That person gets the same attention as the *New York Times*."

Just as the institution's character influences the news service's, institutional priorities set the agenda for PR priorities. Since 32.4 percent of the university's funds come from the Wisconsin government—and 72 percent of its students and half its alumni live in-state—the university's top advancement concerns are state-oriented: maintaining legislative support, boosting the state economy, increasing visibility among state residents.

In turn, the news service focuses its efforts on state and local coverage. National attention mostly comes indirectly—as a by-product of overall public information efforts.

Weimer sums up her department's national media program in two sentences. "We respond in a timely and substantive way to inquiries. And when we do see the potential for a national story, we send it out."

Priority begins at home

That's not to say that news service staff members don't care about national media coverage. But it does mean they take a Wisconsin perspective. Science editor Terry Devitt points out that one of the best reasons for seeking national coverage "is to help us in the state battles. An article in the *New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal* has more credibility than an article in a local paper saying the same thing."

These priorities show up in the news service's annual plan, too. Most of the office's 1986-87 goals either call for general improvements or center specifically on local and state programs. The goal "increase national visibility" does appear—as item 23 on a list of 27. In contrast, goals to improve news marketing and targeting overall take a high priority. (Not surprisingly, the staff determines its goals by vote.)

Priorities aside, UW-Madison faces two specific handicaps to competing in the national arena. The first is money. "It isn't that we don't want national coverage," Weimer explains. "It's simply a question of fiscal reality. We haven't had the people or resources to focus on the national media."

Budget reductions in the 1970s forced a severe cutback in PR efforts from which the department is only now recovering, she says. The news service's budget runs about $73,000, excluding salaries. But many elements of the news operation—computers, a university wire service, and several staff positions—were new in the last three years.

Second, there's geography. Most national media are based on the East Coast. And when East Coast media—especially TV news shows—need a source fast, they turn to the vast resources in nearby New York or Boston. "Ted Koppel isn't going to interview our people on 'Nightline,' " Hove points out. "They grab whomever they can get in the neighborhood."

Of course, logistics shouldn't keep the print media from calling. But UW-Madison staff say they've seen a certain amount of parochialism. "We run into the 'bicoastal syndrome,' " says newswriter Bell. "They think if something isn't happening on one of the coasts, it's not worth the coverage."

When the media do call Madison, Weimer says, it's usually for a "Midwestern" view on a national trend. (Or, as Devitt says, "When they want a photo, they tell you to get a cow in it.")

To the UW staff, this attitude is more of a nuisance than a problem. "I don't blame people sitting in an office in Manhattan if they don't think 'Madison.' Why should they? We don't sit around thinking of them," Hove says.

"The important thing is that they get what they need when they need it."

Spreading the word

That philosophy—supplying what the media need when they need it—seems to work. Because, despite low budgets and inconvenient geography, UW-Madison does get calls—and coverage.

All the staff members point out that credit for any media success goes to the university's programs and people. "You can't get national media coverage unless you have something worth covering," Hove says. "Our people make news."

The only trick, Weimer says, is to get the news out the door in the first place: "If we do a good story and get it out, it has legs, it goes places."

Staff members cite several areas of the news service's general program that help them on the national level.

- *Releases.* "They're our bread and butter," Weimer says. Each of the news service's writers—five professionals and three students—handles a set of campus beats. In addition to covering routine events, they develop substantive stories related to current news. The key is "to seek what's newsworthy," says newswriter Bell.

Of the 15 or so stories the news service releases each week, about half are substantive news and feature stories that go beyond the Madison area. About one-fourth of all stories go beyond the state; these are mostly on science and research.

Staff members gear their writing to their primary audience: Wisconsin residents. "No matter how well-written they are, our news releases aren't going to show up verbatim in the *New York Times*," Bell points out. However, if a story's topic is potentially of national interest, the news service sends the release to national outlets.

And, when possible, writers try to think of nontraditional outlets for their features. For example, the staff sent two recent stories—one on a $1.7-million donation of computers from AT&T and another on a controversy over UW computer sales to students—to national computer magazines and tabloids.

- *Wire service contacts.* "Fifty percent of the time we get national coverage, it's through the wire services," Weimer says. Sometimes a Wisconsin newspaper will channel a story on to the Associated Press or United Press International. And the news service places stories on its own—through personal contact with wire reporters or, more often, via U•WIRE, the news service's own electronic-feed service.

The news service went on-line in fall 1984 to get releases out faster and more easily. Every weekday afternoon, assistant director Steve Schumacher edits and transmits the news service's stories along with any sent over from the other campus press offices. The releases go by computer link to the Madison AP office and the Milwaukee UPI office as well as the daily newspapers in both cities.

- *Resource services.* In addition to maintaining the morgue and photo files and producing a daily news summary, librarian Mary Langenfeld answers outside inquiries, puts reporters in touch with faculty experts, and prepares an annual press reference list—60 pages of faculty sources and their specialties. She estimates that 10 to 15 percent of her queries come from national media.

Langenfeld doesn't actively market her services; reporters simply learn from experience that she's the one to call. Most important, she provides good information. As *Newsweek*'s McCormick wrote, "She has earned our solid trust by never over-selling a prof." ("*Newsweek* is one of my better clients," Langenfeld says.)

- *Broadcast services.* Staff writers routinely tape their interviews and pass broadcast versions of stories to Karen Walsh, broadcast news director. She and reporter Barb Wolff produce one or two audio news stories daily; these are noted on the state AP and UPI broadcast news wires. An average of 35 Wisconsin radio stations call over a special phone line each day to record the stories for play in their newscasts.

Walsh doesn't have the resources to routinely produce and send audio or video materials to the national media, although she does occasionally pitch ideas to her national contacts. More often, she works as an agent. About once a week, national and regional radio and television producers call for her suggestions on campus sources. Similarly, if a TV crew is planning to come to campus for one story, she solicits additional ideas from the staff and arranges for the crew to cover other stories on the same visit.

In addition, some 40 radio talk show hosts and 10 TV producers around the country receive Woiff's monthly tip sheet listing faculty speakers and timely topics. Interested hosts can contact the speakers directly. Wolff and Walsh carefully screen potential radio stars. "We never refer someone who isn't a good radio interview," Walsh says.

- *Personal contacts.* Weimer calls this "having people who know people." For example, there's photographer Kienitz, an alumnus and Madison native who joined the staff in September, bringing a host of national credits and connections from his free-lance experience. And science editor Devitt builds his connections by attending major scientific conferences "where all the reporters are in one place."

Devitt's travels aside, the news service lacks the time and money to send writers on regular trips to harvest media contacts. Instead, it opts for a traditional Wisconsin approach: It grows its own. One UW graduate, for example, works in the Milwaukee UPI office; another is a *New York Times* science writer. They and other home-grown journalists frequently turn to alma mater for sources.

The news service cultivates transplants, too. Since February 1986, the Science Writer in Residence program has brought a nationally known science journalist to campus for two weeks each semester. The program is a grant-funded joint project of the news service, the journalism school, and UW's Science Writing Program. The visitor presents guest lectures, meets with students and faculty, explores the university's research environment, and—ideally—leaves with plenty of story ideas and contacts. For instance, the most recent guest, Patrick Young of Newhouse News Service, published two stories based on information he gathered during his stay.

Bright lights

Of course, once the story's out the door, you can never be sure where it will go—or where it won't.

When American cancer researcher Arnold Lockshin defected with his family to the Soviet Union in October 1986, a local reporter called the news service. Lockshin had received his master's and doctoral degrees in the 1960s from UW—and the eminent scientist who had been Lockshin's adviser was still with the university.

Weimer was well acquainted with the professor and knew he'd be a willing and articulate source—as well as an important name. "We tracked him down, interviewed him, and, after a group editing session around the terminal, managed to move the story before 5 p.m.," she recalls. "We then transmitted it to the two Milwaukee papers, the two Madison papers, AP, and UPI."

Except for the local reporter who alerted the news service, Wisconsin reporters didn't follow up on the story. But the UW-Madison article, which included some new insights about Lockshin, did end up in the *Los Angeles Times*. The *Times*, in turn, put its version out on its own news service.

Only then did the *Milwaukee Journal* pick up the story, printing it with a credit to the *Los Angeles Times*—even though the Wisconsin paper could have run the same story days earlier.

"This happens to us often," Weimer says. "We'll give the local papers a jump on a story, and they still wait and run the AP version of it later"—after the story has proved itself on the national scene.

As far as Hove is concerned, that's all right—as long as the news gets out and the media get what they need.

"Our job," he says, "is to keep the lights on and the traffic moving."

Apply with Care

It's obvious that much of the reason the UW-Madison News Service's methods work is that they're in tune with the university's culture. For that reason, other institutions shouldn't adopt those same methods without thinking carefully about their own institutional character.

For example, independent institutions tend to approach the media differently than public ones, says Director Linda Weimer. "When Stanford opened up its faculty senate meeting to the press, it was a big issue. To us, that's a different world entirely. At a public university, even research scientists routinely make their work public."

Public Information Director Art Hove points out that UW-Madison's policy of encouraging the press to contact campus sources directly works because most of UW's people "are used to the fishbowl environment" and can handle the media comfortably. And Weimer notes that size makes a difference as well: "At a lot of small places, if a student commits suicide, they won't talk about it. Here, our people will."

For that matter, Weimer says, the atmosphere varies in different areas of the institution—and so, in turn, do the PR policies. "The culture of the university's Center for Health Sciences is different from the general university culture because of the sensitive nature of the material they're dealing with—patients' health, confidentiality, research." In turn, the public affairs department there is more careful about press access to sources, she says.

But given the caveat that you should consider your own institution's differences, Weimer and her staff do offer tips for other PR people:

- *Play up your strong points.* Weimer acknowledges that UW-Madison is an exceptionally large university with plenty of activity to promote. But she thinks that emphasizing strengths is especially important for smaller institutions: "There's nothing better a small school could do *except* capitalize on its strengths."
- *Cover your institution in a substantive way.* "Don't just cover who's visiting your campus or the latest award or grant," Weimer says. "Cover who's behind that program or what's happening with that grant. If you do substantive work, it doesn't matter if you're not famous. It will get picked up and used."
- *Always make the most of what resources you have—* "even if you think you have nothing," says broadcast news director Walsh. "You don't need equipment to get someone on a national talk show. You just need guts and a telephone."
- *Provide service.* "Respond in a timely way, even if you have to stay a little later or work a little harder or do some of the reporters' work for them," Weimer says. An office answering machine is a must, she adds.
- *Maintain good working relationships with the media.* That's especially true of the wire services, Weimer says. Even if you don't have a formal national media program, good exposure on the wires can turn your local coverage into regional or national coverage. —RG

Take the Initiative

Carnegie Mellon's proactive program makes national coverage its top priority

by Robin Goldman

Keith Moore proudly shows off his university's new logo: a square tilted at precisely 14 degrees off the baseline, with the words "Carnegie Mellon" imposed in bold Bodoni type.

Part of a total publications redesign, the "tilted window" is both elegant and versatile, says Moore, the vice president for university relations. "You can put a photo in it or run it in a color or a screen," he says, pointing out various examples in the publications scattered around his office.

"When we first came out with it the faculty was furious," he adds. "They were upset that we dropped the word 'University' from Carnegie Mellon."

But that decision was made with the university's national image in mind. "We're trying to increase use of the two words 'Carnegie Mellon,' " Moore explains. "If we put the whole thing in, everyone will short-form it to CMU." And a set of initials can hardly stand out amid the many similar institutional abbreviations already in use across the country.

Moore isn't the only person at Carnegie Mellon who always thinks national. Six years ago, President Richard M. Cyert set establishing national visibility as a university-wide goal. "He wanted to spread our recruiting base, attract faculty, and get more donations in. To do this, you have to have a product that's recognizable across America," explains Moore, whom Cyert hired in 1980 to direct the increased effort.

Backed by presidential support, Moore developed a hard-driving, almost single-minded university relations program. Its primary goal: to build a national reputation for Carnegie Mellon. Its means: gaining national media coverage. "We increased the travel budget so we could take the initiative in placing stories nationally. We took Dick Cyert and faculty members around the country. And we raised staff salaries to recruit the best people," says Moore.

That means people who are "marketing-oriented and personable,"

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he adds. "We have no writing recluses on this staff."

Rather, Moore's staff members have developed a distinctive routine based on a few basic principles: They work aggressively to cultivate personal contacts with national media people. They allocate their efforts to bring the best possible payoff in national visibility. And they actively market their services to the campus community.

Not only is this program in tune with Carnegie Mellon's goals, it's in tune with the university atmosphere as well, says Don Hale, assistant vice president for university relations. "This place is aggressive as hell," he says. "It's high-energy, achievement-oriented, proactive. And our media philosophy matches up with the institution."

The campus as client

Moore's idea of the role of institutional relations is evident even in his staff members' titles. The media relations staff includes four "account executives" plus a sports information director. Each serves as PR liaison for a specific part of the university.

"The idea isn't terribly original. Advertising agencies have been doing it for years," Moore says. But the terminology underscores what Moore describes as the "client-agent relationship" between the campus and his office. "We treat faculty, department heads, deans as clients. We develop PR plans and prepare PR publications for them." In the past, Moore's staff members even marketed to the campus community a workshop on how to deal with TV reporters.

To be more accessible—and more visible—to their campus clients, all but one of the account executives have their offices in the buildings of the colleges they serve. (The remaining one will move next year.) "They go to cocktail parties and faculty meetings, and they talk with people in the halls," Hale says. "They develop a rapport. That's part of their job."

Despite the scattered offices, the PR operation is rigidly centralized. Account executives make a point of checking in once or twice a day at the main university relations office, located in a onetime fraternity residence. That building—staff members call it "the little house on the prairie"—holds the special events and government relations offices, support staff, and Moore's and Hale's offices. (The publications department, which also falls under Moore's purview, is located in another building.)

And to keep in constant touch, the account executives send messages and other written materials via their IBM-PC microcomputers. Electronic mail and word processing are only two of the uses the staff have found for computers; the office also manages databases for an extensive hometown news program and for tracking news coverage, media contacts, and faculty research. In fact, Hale refers to the office as "one of the most computerized college PR offices in the nation." But then, that simply reflects Carnegie Mellon's reputation as perhaps the most computerized college campus in the nation—a reputation Moore's staff worked hard to build.

How to hustle

Hale recalls an incident from his first week on the job, in January 1982. "There was an earthquake in California. As it happens, we have a faculty member in civil engineering who knows a lot about earthquakes. I called a bunch of national media people, starting with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, offering this expert as a resource."

Within a few hours, he'd made the connections for interviews that led to mentions in the *Chronicle* and *Newsweek* and articles over the wire services, as well as spots on local television. Hale sums up this system simply: "You've got to hustle."

At Carnegie Mellon, hustling means responding to media queries according to the "five F's: "frank, factual, friendly, first, and fast," Moore says.

Hale especially stresses "fast"—a point too many PR people neglect, he says. "For much of the advancement field—publications, for instance—deadlines are next week, next month, next year. In media relations, it's *now*."

Still, he adds, that's what makes his job exciting: "You get your payback right away. You place that story; it runs tomorrow. Then, if you've hustled for the reporters, they'll remember—and they'll call you back."

Ensuring those call-backs is more important than trying to direct the content of an individual story. "We want to develop a reputation and a relationship," Hale says. "So we'll do whatever we can to get reporters the information they need. If we don't have an expert, we'll track one down somewhere else. If it's a negative story, we'll take our lumps."

Hustling means more than just reacting, however. It means being proactive—that is, making things happen instead of waiting for them to happen. According to Peggy Neely, account executive for the College of Fine Arts, the work is "20 percent response and 80 percent initiative."

The staff has codified initiative into a routine. Its principles:

• *Look for news links.* "The media sets the agenda," Hale points out. "We try to fit Carnegie Mellon into that. When a subject's hot, we use that as an avenue."

Staff members read newspapers daily to identify potential connections. "If it takes 45 minutes to read the papers, that's not killing time," Hale says. "We all spend time on the papers. Then the magazines come in. I haven't read a novel in months."

Of course, in order to link the campus to the news, account executives need to know what the campus has to offer. "The day the Bhopal accident occurred, our science and technology account executive made 14 phone calls to national publications," Moore says. "The result was a slew of stories." What made this possible, Moore adds, was that Carnegie Mellon faculty were doing work relevant to the story—and the account executive knew it.

Ideally, Moore says, staff members also seek openings for subjects on the institution's agenda: "We not only take advantage of hot topics, but we also promote what we want to sell." This isn't always easy; Moore's been trying to sell a story on Carnegie Mellon's core curriculum revision for six years—and has had little success.

The best kind of story, says Neely, meets both tests: "It's newsworthy, *and* it fits the institution's goals."

• *Cultivate contacts.* Hale and Moore encourage staff to establish personal contact with national reporters in their areas. That means not only phone calls and letters, but also frequent media trips.

"We travel more than the average PR office," says Moore. Among them, the account executives make a total of some two dozen one- or two-day trips a year, usually to New York or Washington. The account executives establish and maintain personal contacts, find out what projects the reporters are working on, and suggest Carnegie Mellon angles.

Staff members pursue national contacts in Carnegie Mellon's local neighborhood as well. The *Wall Street Journal, Business Week,* AP, and UPI all have bureaus in Pittsburgh, and their representatives join local reporters at Carnegie Mellon's periodic media breakfasts and lunches.

In addition to making connections at newsmagazines and major newspapers, the account executives cultivate specialty media in their fields. For example, Ed Delaney, account executive for the business and public policy schools, keeps in touch with reporters at such magazines as *Business Week, Fortune, The Economist, Forbes,* and *Barron's.*

And to keep track of media contacts, the staff uses a computer database with individual biographical files on some 200 national editors and reporters. Account executives can check the files before making calls to find out, for example, a reporter's preferred nickname, professional interests, or hobbies—as well as the date and circumstances of his or her last contact with Carnegie Mellon. Staff members update the files after media trips.

- *Market ideas, not stories.* "News releases are one of the worst ways to get national media coverage," Hale says. While smaller newspapers or local media might like to receive completed stories, national publications or networks virtually always write their own material. In many cases, then, national journalists would rather have a selection of topics they might pursue in their own way instead of a finished story they wouldn't use as written.

So, instead of spending time writing stories, staff members collect ideas, pitch angles, and line up contacts.

Chief among their tools is "Story Ideas," a monthly tip sheet summarizing five or six feature ideas in a paragraph each. The sheet goes to about 350 print and broadcast journalists. Sometimes the tips yield stories immediately; sometimes, Hale says, writers hold on to them for reference on future stories.

For broadcast media, Sports Information Director Bruce Gerson compiles a list of faculty experts and interview topics every other month. "On the Air" goes to about 100 broadcast people, both locally and in markets across the country that are targeted for admissions. And for some 300 writers in science and technology, there's "Quanta," a bimonthly tip sheet focusing on those topics.

Then there are the query letters, phone calls, and personal visits. And, if absolutely necessary, Hale will send a release. "There are going to be reporters and editors who want to operate in different ways," he says. "If they want letters, we'll send them. If they want story ideas, we'll come up with them. If they want news releases, we'll write them. We're selling, they're buying."

Payback and priorities

Not all staff members take so strong a line. For example, Neely points out that her beat—arts—requires a good amount of work on the local level: "We have to fill seats at the shows." To do that, she needs to write releases.

"There's an ongoing battle between the routine releases and proactive features," Neely says. "Digging up stories and getting them out is definitely the most important thing. But the day-to-day mundane work is essential, too."

Essential—but still secondary, Hale says. He emphasizes that the staff doesn't ignore the local media: "We never neglect them—we want the coverage." So tip sheets and breakfast invitations go to local reporters as well as national ones, and local reporters get the same fast response when they call.

But because all of Carnegie Mellon's PR programs are geared to serve the media that will bring the most return and the broadest audience, staff members won't work to place a local story if they could spend that time placing one nationally—although, Hale adds, "We'll often begin our national efforts on a story by placing it locally first."

The trick, Hale explains, is to "respond to all requests that come in, but channel what goes out."

And Moore will even turn down a chance for coverage if it requires more effort or resources than it's worth. For example, given the opportunity to arrange for a Japanese television crew to tape an interview with President Cyert, Moore's first question was "whether this show is worth our time. If it's Tokyo TV, if we can get 4 or 5 million viewers, yes, but not if it's in the hinterlands or some suburban station."

The PR officer as broker

In order to channel media relations this carefully, Moore insists that his office arrange all contacts between the media and the campus. Not only does this policy allow the university relations office to direct coverage, but it also makes media contact "a whole lot easier for all involved," says Hale.

"People, especially our top researchers, would rather we set up the interviews and make the connections," he explains. "And most of the writers we work with know we can get them where they want to go faster. We can hustle for them."

All tip sheets list account executives, not the sources themselves, as contact people for interviews. And Moore frowns on faculty or deans who try to make their own media connections because the results, he says, can be counterproductive or a duplication of effort. "That's not the way we do it here," he tells them.

Of course, to establish this policy, the department first needed to earn the confidence of people on campus. And that took some effort—about a year of careful cultivation, Moore says.

"We started by working with the most cooperative faculty members and deans," he says. "Then we showed other people the results"—the published stories.

Now, copies of those stories appear everywhere from departmental bulletin boards to the pages of "As Others See Us," a compilation of national articles that mention Carnegie Mellon. The 12-page tabloid, which appears three times a year, typically includes 50 to 60 clips from national magazines and major newspapers.

In fact, perhaps the most effective way Moore's staff encourages cooperation from faculty and deans is to play on their sense of professional competition. It's not unusual, Ed Delaney points out, for a featured professor to pop into his office to remind him to post the clipping around campus, or for other faculty members to pitch their own projects to him after they see a write-up on a colleague.

Delaney recalls one episode when his efforts led to a story in the *New York Times*—and the featured professor came by to complain: "He thought some points weren't clear."

That same day, however, both the president and the professor's dean told Delaney how much they liked the story. "They must have spoken to the professor, too, because he came back and told me he'd changed his mind and the story was fine after all. Apparently he just needed to be reinforced by his peer group."

Staff members agree that the account executive system has proved particularly useful in cementing on-campus relationships. Faculty find it comfortable to work with people based in their own divisions. And, Delaney points out, he serves as his division's liaison for all publications and PR activity: "If faculty members want editorial help, they ask me. And they find they can get publications work done faster if they work through me."

The power of the president

Even in the most cooperative institution, though, some academicians will balk at being told they must leave PR work to the PR office—especially if that PR office doesn't think they're worth covering. "Of 300 faculty members, as at any college, there'll be 100 who aren't doing anything of interest to the media," Moore says.

In extreme cases, Moore has support where it counts: at the presidential level. Moore recalls the time "one dean told the president I wasn't doing his college one bit of good." Cyert's response, according to Moore: "From what I see, you're not doing anything worth national media coverage. Why should I send Keith to you?"

Of course, President Cyert's role goes far beyond the occasional phone call to an uncooperative professor. Cyert has worked to make national visibility a campus-wide concern—and that, in turn, makes the job of the PR staff a little easier.

"Most people on campus are very keenly aware now of the need for good public relations," Delaney says. "That spirit comes right from the president on down. He's led the way."

In addition, Moore points out, Cyert enjoys dealing with the media. Moore recalls the first time he took the president on a media trip, in 1980: "We walked all over Chicago, going from one appointment to another, dodging puddles in the rain all day." Naturally, Moore was worried whether Cyert would consider the trip worth the effort. "But when it was over, he turned to me and said, 'That was fun. We'll have to do this more often.' "

Moore and Hale work to ensure that Cyert appears regularly in the national news—both by pitching interview opportunities and by promoting op-ed columns by Cyert to national outlets. (And, Moore acknowledges wryly, being proactive is as important in dealing with his own media-savvy president as it is in dealing with the press: Every few months, he tries to come up with a suitable news opportunity for Cyert —"before the presidential biological clock goes off.")

But does it work?

The university relations office follows up its fine-tuned routine for getting national coverage with an equally systematic method of tracking its success.

Public Relations Secretary Barbara Martin uses a computer program to track placements in local and national print media. Using key words, staff can consult the database to find out how many articles appeared on a given subject in what publications over a specified time period. The answers can be impressive: As Moore likes to point out, the *New York Times* carried a story involving Carnegie Mellon more than once a week in 1985 and 1986.

What really matters, though, is not how many clips staff members accumulate, but what effect the stories have. "We set arbitrary goals for placements, but I'm not going to evaluate my staff on how many stories they get in the *New York Times*," Hale stresses. "We evaluate based on the types of things we're placing."

Counting clips can occasionally serve as a guidepost, he adds. "When we compare the numbers to the year before, we can see them change to reflect changes in our program." But he always takes content into account. For example, a few years ago a major goal of the program was to establish Carnegie Mellon nationally as a leader in computer use in higher education. Now, the department is working on expanding and balancing that national reputation. "At the end of the year, we'll look at whether we've succeeded in promoting things outside of the technical area," Hale says.

There's plenty of evidence that the office's efforts are helping accomplish the university's goals. In admissions, for example, 72 percent of Carnegie Mellon's 1986 freshmen came from outside Pennsylvania—compared to 50 percent in 1980.

As far as Moore and Hale are concerned, though, there's still a lot more they'd like to do. One of Hale's biggest frustrations is the sometimes sporadic maintenance of the department's elaborate computer databases. "We have the systems in place, but we need bodies to put the information in. We could be further along if we could commit the resources to that."

Moore adds to the wish list. "We need more TV, more institutional research, more computer capability."

And more control of PR-related activities across campus. Hale would like to see the university centralize all its publications and audio-visuals into a coherent communications program: "We need to make sure everything that goes out is consistent."

It helps, he adds, that other advancement departments such as admissions and development are working off the same institutional plans, toward the same goals.

Know where you're going

Moore and Hale stress over and over how vital those goals are to the PR program's national focus—and its success. "You have to know your institution's goals," says Moore. "It's foolish to set national media coverage as a priority unless you have a reason for it."

Without institution-wide support, a national media program of Carnegie Mellon's intensity would be both inappropriate and unsuccessful, Moore warns. He points out that Carnegie Mellon has fueled its media efforts with money—the media relations budget is $78,500, not counting salaries. And the university has backed the budget with its staff. In his 12 years with Carnegie Mellon, Ed Delaney has seen the university relations office move "from a small shop of four professional staff members to a big department store of 11."

There's also the question of time. "You can't build a national media program overnight," says Moore—even if it's your top priority. "It takes two to four years to determine what should be done and then to do it."

And, like any choice of priorities, Carnegie Mellon's required some tradeoffs. For example, Moore says, "We delayed improving our alumni magazine in favor of adding an account executive and getting better national coverage."

Hale points out that more and more institutions' presidents seem to be calling for national media coverage. "Sure, it's nice to be in the national media, but you shouldn't be working at it if it's not appropriate to your institution. Maybe your PR program should be targeted to certain geographic areas or certain student groups."

At Carnegie Mellon, Hale believes, the effort is well spent. "You've got to do things in PR for a purpose, to accomplish something for the institution. I believe in what I do. That's why it's fun to work here."

What Makes a Media Master

What kind of person gets results with the national media? Don Hale, Carnegie Mellon's assistant vice president for university relations, cites a number of traits he sees as common to successful media relations people.

- *Speed.* "When you get a media call, that's what you do, at that moment. A reporter is writing for the next day." One journalist Hale knows tells of a college that took a month to answer a query for him. "He said he'd never call *them* back."
- *A proactive attitude.* "You have to hustle. If you're at a small liberal arts college, this is even more important, because you have fewer opportunities. When they come, jump on them."
- *News judgment.* "You've got to know what makes news. A lot of what goes on at colleges and universities doesn't."
- *Marketing skill.* "Doing national media involves a sales technique. We look for people who not only know what's news, but who can sell it—on the phone, in person, with letters."
- *Personality.* This is especially important if you try to establish personal media contact: "If you can't develop rapport, you're history."
- *Energy.* "Media relations isn't a 40-hour-a-week job. You do whatever it takes to get the job done."
- *Attention to detail.* "To do a professional job, you have to cover all the bases. You can't be sloppy."
- *Writing skill.* Even if you aren't writing releases, you need to be able to craft concise, effective query letters and news tips. "If you can't write, take a hike." —RG

But Is It Worth It?

Consultants weigh the pros and cons of seeking national media coverage

by Jan Michelsen

Ah, the sweet success of national media attention. It conjures up visions of skyrocketing enrollment and expanding endowments. But how well deserved is this reputation for wonder, power, and might? And just how good a job can—or should—mass media coverage do when it comes to attracting precious funds, friends, and freshmen?

The seven public relations consultants I interviewed laud the benefits of national coverage but admit it has its limitations. True, such attention can boost your PR efforts. However, you shouldn't see it as the *raison d'etre* of your communication program.

Here, these consultants take a realistic look at national media coverage. Then they offer ideas about which approaches will help—or hinder—your quest for plum placements.

Evaluating its virtues

Some of the advantages of national coverage, although difficult to quantify, are virtually priceless. Among them:

- *The national media reach a broad audience.* "Through the mass media, institutions live up to their responsibilities to educate, to use what they have to contribute to society in a substantive way," notes Dave Morrison of Campus Crossroads, a New Hampshire-based media relations/admissions outreach firm. With the help of the *Wall Street Journal* or "Nightline," an institution can share valuable research findings with thousands of readers or millions of viewers, far more than its own limited audience.
- *National media coverage boosts morale.* Never underestimate the incredible psychological effect of public attention. When the news is good, "national media coverage contributes significantly to the team spirit and attitudes of the faculty and students," says Jim Jarvela, also of Campus Crossroads. "Such attention serves to spur faculty on and encourages future cooperation and participation in media events."
- *National media coverage commands respect.* National publications and broadcasts often generate stories and ideas for the local media, points out Carol Halstead, president of College Connections, an educational PR firm in New York City. "It can't make a sale, but it can help enhance your image, create awareness, and inspire interest," she says. For example, a mention in the *New York Times* may give one of your programs the credibility and status that will cause local and regional media to pay attention.

Jan Michelsen is director of hospital relations at Indiana University Hospitals in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Caveats to consider

Even so, don't expect the mass media to work miracles. You'll get the best mileage from coverage if you exploit its strengths, recognize its frailties, and creatively combine it with other public relations tactics. To do so, keep the following considerations in mind:

- *National media exposure can't take the place of a solid local and regional PR program.* "National media coverage should be viewed as an important supplement to a marketing communications effort, not a substitute for it," notes Barry Wanger, president of Barry Wanger Associates in Brookline, Massachusetts.

- *Although national coverage reassures and reinforces, it doesn't change behavior or attitudes.* Studies show that mass media coverage "is purely an awareness device," says Patrick Jackson, senior counsel of Jackson, Jackson, & Wagner, who's known for applying behavioral research to public relations. "Its ability to motivate behavior is limited."

An isolated mention in a national publication, no matter how prominent, won't attract an application, secure a gift, or woo a legislator. These sorts of direct results come only from a program of carefully planned and executed communications—whether they're publications, personal visits, direct mail, or special events.

- *What you do with national coverage is more important than the amount of coverage you get.* As Jackson's research shows, *Time* magazine and "Good Morning America" can't get targeted messages across to specific audiences. But you can. Distributing reprints of prominent mentions to targeted groups allows you to show the people who matter most to your institution that its faculty and programs are nationally recognized, Jarvela says.

"Good national clips are valuable additions to reports to foundations, agencies, prospective students, and donors as proof to those audiences that they are supporting an important project," agrees Wanger.

- *National attention won't provide instant fame.* Much of the news the mass media covers (yes, even stories about your institution) travels a predictable path: in one ear and out the other. Most national coverage is inherently short and sporadic.

"Simple mathematics tells us that with 3,000 degree-granting institutions simultaneously vying for a few prime mentions, regular coverage is unlikely for all but the few most-noticed and national institutions," warns Jim Lubetkin, vice president of Edward Howard & Co. in Cleveland, Ohio.

Accept that fact and match your PR methods (and budgets) to your institution's identity and goals. "Especially if you are a local or regional institution," Lubetkin says, "strengthening internal operations and improving local and regional publicity efforts may be the most productive use of PR dollars."

- *Administrators may have unrealistic expectations.* What should you do if your president and trustees are disappointed with anything less than monthly mentions on the 6 o'clock news? In most cases, it's up to you, the PR professional, to narrow the gap between expectations and reality.

Help administrators and faculty understand that national media coverage is not the only (and sometimes not the best) way to get the job done. Make your case by combining scholarly research about the role and power of the media with baseline studies about your own key publics: who they are, where they get their information, and how they make decisions.

Rules to remember

Given that you've considered the part national media coverage should play, accepted its shortcomings, and assigned a reasonable emphasis to its pursuits, here are suggestions that may help you to achieve your goals.

- *Take a broad view.* Only a true understanding of what makes news will help you achieve consistent national coverage. So keep up with current events and link your campus happenings to them. Look beyond the way a topic affects your institution. Emphasize instead the topic's significance to the region, society, and a particular publication's or show's audience, says Fred Gehrung. He's with Gehrung Associates University Relations Counselors of Keene, New Hampshire, which specializes in media-related college visibility campaigns.

Halstead suggests focusing on people—fascinating faculty, super students, achieving alumni—as an effective way to approach a trend or issue. Then, she adds, "Take the time and trouble to give the media background on the whole issue, not just on your institution."

- *Have a legitimate story.* Providing solid professional information about news of truly national significance will earn you respect and, eventually, some attention from the national media, Wanger says. But be honest. Don't try to land network coverage for a story that just doesn't have a national angle.

- *Involve other sources for a trend story.* The national media will be more responsive if they think your campus is an example of a significant development having wide effect, says Gehrung. Also, don't hesitate to cooperate and share with a half-dozen other institutions that reflect the same trend, says Lubetkin. The result may well be better coverage for all.

- *Develop media savvy.* Follow the golden rule of marketing: Know what your consumers—in this case, the media—want; and then give it to them perfectly packaged and easy to obtain. Make it your policy to provide solid, professional information in easy-to-digest form—and do it fast.

"Too often we are blinded by our own agenda and press the news media to accept *our* idea instead of paying attention to what *they* are concerned with," Gehrung says.

- *Try something different.* With so many institutions scheming for success, you need to draw upon all your creative resources to make your mark. Remember, there are few absolutes when it comes to national media coverage. It all depends on the institution, the media, the timing, and a host of uncontrollable, unpredictable factors.

Section 3

Building Bridges or Burning Them: How to Work with the Media

Judgment Calls

Most reporters don't mind phone calls from PR people if PR people use common sense

by Jane Lareau

It happens all the time, says Muriel Cohen, the *Boston Globe's* education reporter. She gets a call at 5 p.m.—an hour before deadline—from the PR director of Barnstormer College. He or she explains at length how important Barnstormer's president is and then says, "My boss wants to know if you're interested in interviewing our president, who'll be in Boston tomorrow to address an alumni group. Can we set up an appointment at 11 a.m.? That's when the president's available."

"Right off the bat, I'm angry," says Cohen. "They've been making arrangements for this visit for weeks and now they're calling me at the last minute. Plus, I'm not convinced this person is very interesting. Why should I drop tomorrow's plans for this?

"Many people just don't use good PR sense."

The telephone—is it an instrument of bridge building or bridge burning? It depends on who does the dialing. Many public relations practitioners do understand reporters' deadlines and what they want. But many others, it seems, do not.

Admittedly, reporters' preferences vary as much as reporters do. But when you have news, you should know the best way to get it to reporters fast—and in a way that fits their schedule, not yours. The question is, how? Do you call them? Do you write? Do you come in person? Or do you do all three?

Getting to know them

The answers are yes, yes, yes, and yes. Whether you're trying to get your story through local, state, or national media, reporters say press releases are not better than phone calls, nor the other way around. Reporters want you to come up with a comfortable combination of phone calls, press releases, letters, and personal visits. Comfortable, that is, for them.

"Calling, writing letters, sending press releases—any of those is fine, if not done to excess," says Gene I. Maeroff, education writer for the *New York Times.* "If someone is sending me a release a day or calling me once a week, I would have to believe that person isn't being selective about what he or she pitches to me. Clearly there can't be that much going on at one institution that would be of interest to the *New York Times.*"

For all her unhappiness with 5 o'clock phoners, Cohen doesn't dislike calls. In fact, she prefers them—at her convenience. She says smart public relations people call around 10 a.m. and ask if it's a good time to talk. Then they give a quick run-down of the news item. If she's interested, she asks for written material.

But she won't be interested if you don't give her a reason to be. "For goodness' sake, read our paper," she stresses. "We're always pushing something. Smart PR people will say to me, 'I know you're working on the homeless. Here's a story on how our students are running programs for the homeless.' "

Diane Evans of the *Akron Beacon Journal* likes to be alerted by phone when a story is special. "Sometimes, no matter how exciting the writing in the press release, a telephone call should be used to stress something important in that release.

"I recently got a news release telling me about a pianist who was putting on a program for gifted students. Had I not already had a special interest in music, I would not have known that the pianist was of international acclaim. In a case like this, the person should have given me a call and said, 'Hey, this is really pretty special.' "

Robert Frahm of the *Hartford Courant* says he gets so much mail that a call helps alert him when something important is coming. "A call is more likely to get my attention."

On the other hand, an article in the February 1984 issue of the *Journalist* featured a handful of editors and reporters who said, essentially, that most phone calls from PR people are unnecessary and could make a reporter or editor hostile.

"Especially grating are the calls asking if we received a given release," said Robert W. Gardner, managing editor of *Industry Week.* "With hundreds arriving each day, there is no way to tell. Such a call reflects ignorance of how a publication works."

Casey Banas, education editor for the *Chicago Tribune,* says he also prefers a press release "or something written. I get so many phone calls that it's nice to get something in writing that I can focus on."

Even so, Banas says a call is good for alerting him to a specific story—something important, of course—that's coming. "When annual SAT scores are released, someone from the College Board always calls me and says that they'll be sending the complete report in a few days. I get ample notice to make any preparations for the story."

John Norton, education writer for *The State* in Columbia, South Carolina, likes written material, too. "I prefer a well-written press release to sell me a story," he says. "However, if someone particularly wants me or my paper to do the story, they should contact me with a letter."

Norton doesn't completely discourage phone calls, but you take a chance when you call him. "You don't know if I'm on a deadline. You don't know if I'm in a bad mood and only listening to half of what you say. With a letter, I can look at it in my own time and, if it's interesting, call you back when it suits me."

What broadcasters say

Television and radio reporters and producers work in much the same way newspaper reporters do. They want to receive news releases far enough in advance to allow them time to plan—say, two weeks. They want a call when something special is happening. They don't want to be pushed.

Jane Lareau, formerly director of college relations at the College of Charleston in Charleston, South Carolina, is a free-lance writer in that city.

They want you to pay attention to their deadlines. And, they say, if they like to work with you, they can do you some favors, too.

"We're in constant contact with a number of regional and national networks," says Al Hinman, managing editor at WBT-TV in Charlotte, North Carolina. "This station is one of the primary points for the CBS Southeast regional feed. If you're thinking about regional or national coverage, you can mention it to us and ask us if we've considered pitching it to national. If it's good enough, we'll try it."

Hinman says a local story needs to be strong on its own or relevant to something going on. "You can always offer us an expert to comment on a national event. That's one way to get your school mentioned."

He emphasizes that PR people depend on a good working relationship with the local news teams. "What we want to see is a person who will be as quick to confirm bad news about their school as they are to call us with good news." When favor time comes, he says, his staff often remembers the PR people who helped get good, accurate coverage of a tough story.

National coverage usually takes care of itself; an event either is or isn't newsworthy. But there are still a few things you can do to put yourself in a good position.

"I think that good PR people try to think like the news media," says Brad Kalbfeld, assistant managing editor of news for the AP Broadcasting Service in Washington, DC. "One thing you can do to lure newspeople is to offer us independent access to your people. A call to us saying you will facilitate contact with your people is a big plus. Packaging material and sending it to us is a big waste of time."

Elise Adde, press representative for ABC's "World News Tonight" in New York City, says whom you call depends on where the story is happening. "We have 10 domestic bureaus, including our Washington and New York offices, and 13 foreign bureaus. If you have something of national interest, you would contact your nearest bureau (Atlanta, Miami, Chicago, New England, Los Angeles, Dallas, San Francisco, and Denver). Of course, you wouldn't contact anyone if it wasn't of national interest."

The best way to convey a story idea to Turner Broadcasting System in Atlanta is to get acquainted with its staff first, says Linda Johnson, director of educational affairs for TBS. She recommends developing a relationship with her or, more specifically, with TBS's public affairs person. The public affairs staff can cut across company lines to plug you and your story into the right TBS program.

"Too often," Johnson says, "people come to me only when they think they have something newsworthy or compelling. They haven't developed enough of a relationship with me so that they can pick up the phone and ask me if it's newsworthy or compelling. People who come to me with an open-ended request often get more than they ask for."

Jim Noonan, manager of public affairs communications for CBS News in New York City, also emphasizes how important it is to know your market.

"The same way you have to check to see who's writing about what in the paper, you should see who handles what types of news on the networks," Noonan says. "There are a number of different outlets: 'Sunday Morning News,' '60 Minutes,' '20-20,' 'Face the Nation,' 'Meet the Press,' and so on. You have to get familiar with the kinds of stories they do on the different broadcasts and then make your pitch to the right show."

The CBS news staff sometimes gets press kits that contain 40 different pieces of information, Noonan says, and to him these kits are useless. "The people who send them don't boil them down to a point where I can look at them in one glance and say, 'Hey, that's pretty interesting.' "

He recommends cultivating the ability to see a story as he would and then translating your idea concisely into a letter or a phone call. (But use the letter first, he says, and give him some lead time.)

"We have a lot of air time to fill," Noonan says. "Papers have a lot of space to fill. But don't call us with fluff. And don't call us with an advertisement loosely disguised as a story."

Advice from successful PR pros

Out there listening to what reporters are asking for are PR people who make the most of the information. Their institutions end up in the news often.

Susan Shea, director of college relations at Mills College, says her staff is writing fewer releases for major events. Instead, she calls to suggest the idea to the reporter she would like to cover the story. If the reporter's interested, Shea sends background information explaining the story and its implications and offering contacts.

"I like to make personal calls because I can respond to their concerns. I can evaluate how the conversation is going, and I can shift the focus of the story on the spot if that's what is called for."

One of her most successful experiences was with the *Wall Street Journal*. She knew that the Women's College Coalition was studying graduates from women's colleges and, even though the report wouldn't come out for a year, she mentioned it during a visit to the *Journal*.

"I started the ball rolling early and then worked with the *Journal's* Los Angeles bureau. When the story finally came out about the study, it contained a great deal about Mills. A lot of that I did by simply using the phone."

Tom Stamp, director of public affairs at Kenyon College, says he, too, likes to use the phone to pitch a story. But he also uses it for follow-up calls, to see if a reporter is going to use a story, and to check for any problems.

Banas of the *Chicago Tribune* and Maeroff of the *New York Times* say not only do they not mind follow-up calls, they sometimes request them.

"If a person wants to check with me to see if I've received something, that's fine," says Maeroff. "Sometimes I ask for that. I find PR people very helpful as a whole, as long as they're selective and discriminating."

Jonathan Kleinbard, vice president for university news and community affairs at the University of Chicago, sums it up: "You have to make a judgment on what you're going to push. Flooding people with insubstantial releases or unnecessary calls is just no good. But if you know a writer or editor is interested in a certain subject, calling or writing that person makes good sense."

And in his opinion, many things should be followed up. "The phone is everything."

Call. Don't call. Write. Don't write. What's a PR director to do?

Just ask reporters. They'll be happy to tell you.

The Subject Is Stories

Dumb questions, dumb luck, and smart thinking can lead to scintillating story ideas

by Anthony A. Lyle

In his book *Deciding What's News*, Herbert J. Gans, the Columbia University sociologist, reports on a particular television producer's disappointment with the public. The producer, who had been working on a space mission story, lamented that despite all the razzle-dazzle of launches and scientific discovery and what not, what seemed to interest his viewers most was how our astronauts performed ordinary bodily functions in space.

Elsewhere in the book, Gans claims that TV executive producers get so excited over interesting stories that they sometimes make a point of editing them personally and leaving the more "important" stories to underlings.

Solving the problem of what to do about body waste while in orbit is hardly the crowning achievement of the space program, but who can deny that it is interesting nonetheless? And the occasionally funny little accounts with which the network anchors sometimes close their news programs —the sort of accounts Gans had in mind when he wrote of executive producers being lured away from the more important stuff—can help make the nightly news endurable.

The key word here is *interesting*. (It may the the tiredest word in the language, but we all know what it means.) What makes a good story is an interesting subject that is well—interestingly—presented.

The search for subjects

What makes a good subject? News, for one thing. It is, to be sure, self-selecting, so you can't always plan on it. If there is a problem with news as a good subject, it is not that we fail to recognize it when it happens, but rather that we count as news things that are not news. Sometimes, for example, we are too institutionally self-conscious; we forget that a college or university is much more than a place where people study colleges and universities. There must be at least 100 academic disciplines in our largest institutions, yet you'd never guess that by looking at some of their efforts to communicate.

You'd never guess, either, that some institutions are less than infallible, because everything they do is presented in the best possible light. Presenting everything in the best possible light is "very different from illumination," as a critic remarked in the *New York Times Book Review* not long ago.

Still, genuine news is genuine news so long as we keep in mind our audience: The banner headline in the student newspaper about the postponement or relocation of a rock concert may be of no consequence to the outside world.

What are we left with after the hard news? We are left to our own devices. We are left with the right side of our brains. Those of us who work for educational institutions have an opportunity to exploit the various disciplines that often crowd under the large institutional roof. Not all of these are equally interesting, but it is our job to discover where the strengths lie and take advantage of them. That is sometimes easier said than done.

Suppose you have a music department with three of the leading composers in the country. You want a magazine piece on them. Do you get another member of the department who's a leading musicologist to write it (and risk ending up with something too esoteric)? Do you get the music critic of the *Times* (who has already written pieces on two of the three composers and might, consequently, be less "fresh")? Or do you ask the music critic of the *New Yorker* (who, you're told, seems to care more about opera than anything else musical)? All of these possibilities assume that such musical eminences would be willing to write a piece for you, and some of the possibilities assume that you have a sum of money to pay for the work.

There is at least one other option: You can get a musical ignoramus (note I suggest a *musical* ignoramus and not an ordinary, garden-variety ignoramus) to start out where most of your readers are starting out—with almost no knowledge of serious modern music.

That is what we did some time back, and the result was that a great many readers came away learning for the first time what is really meant by "serious music"—and a lot more. The point is that, when handled properly, even our most specialized academic disciplines can be made interesting to a lay audience.

A good subject can come from a dumb question, too. Which is another way of saying that curiosity seldom does to a story what it did to the proverbial cat. Those who have children of a certain inquisitive age probably have a number of story subjects tossed at them every week—if only they recognized them. I don't know exactly what children are asking their parents nowadays, but maybe some child is asking why blue is blue, and surely another wants to know why birds fly. Someone who specializes in the psychology of color or aerodynamics could probably provide interesting answers. *Harvard Magazine* has raised this sort of thing to the level of sophisticated regular columns, in which readers were recently informed how whales see.

We had a childlike question that served as the basis of an article not long ago. The question: Why do people want to have children? A writer who doesn't have any asked a number of people who do, including her own mother. She also spoke with some social scientists and came up with a decent story, a piece in which she discovered that, for the first time really, people were in the position of having to decide whether or not they wanted children, thanks to the Pill.

Often, you don't come up with a good subject—it comes to you. Only a few weeks ago, an astrophysicist called our office and announced he had

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Anthony A. Lyle is editor of the Pennsylvania Gazette *at the University of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia.*

solved a problem Einstein had worked on for 40 years without success. (It only took the astrophysicist and two collaborators 22 years to arrive at their solution.) We hiked over to his office and got a story that was interesting enough to be picked up by the *Philadelphia Inquirer* for its front page.

The eccentric or off-beat usually makes for a sure-fire story subject. Nora Ephron tells of how she was once doing a story for *Esquire* on deoderants and of how, at one point, she knew the piece couldn't miss no matter how unpolished her prose might be. What had happened was that, in the course of interviewing an executive, she asked how his company could be sure the product actually worked. "That's easy enough," he told her. "We have testers."

Naturally, she proceeded to interview such a creature, and the result was one of the craziest—and most interesting—ingredients in that collection of her essays, *Crazy Salad*.

We had another bit of luck a few years back when we learned that one of our undergraduates had gotten into the *Guinness Book of World Records* by establishing himself as the world's domino king. (He's long since fallen himself, the result of a coup of English origin.) Not only had he set up and knocked over something like 50,000 dominoes, he had also perfected the thing in such an intricate way that in the course of being knocked over, the dominoes climbed ladders, swung across great chasms, spelled out words (in script and block letters), shot off firecrackers, divided into glass tumblers, and did just about every other Rube Goldberg-type thing imaginable. So look out not only for the man/woman-bites-dog story, but, especially, for the man/woman-bites-dog-standing-on-head story.

Though it wasn't exactly eccentric or off-beat, a wonderful piece in the *Brown Alumni Monthly* some time ago had a terrific kind of built-in interest to it. It was a piece based on materials the FBI kept over the years on Brown. A student had obtained the materials legally, under the amendments to the Freedom of Information Act. And any university magazine could do the same thing.

Doing good topics better

One thing that makes an editor especially happy, I think, is doing what everybody else is doing but doing it differently and better. My example for this—which was largely the writer's doing, a kind of *sujet trouve forme*—has to do with the long-depressed academic job market. When he came to the *Pennsylvania Gazette* 10 years ago, Marshall Ledger, our associate editor, brought with him a Ph.D. from Berkeley and a resume that listed something called "Poems by Chairpersons." The "poems" were really dull prose lines from rejection letters collected by Ledger from heads of English departments across the country. Ledger had set the lines in verse. Arnold Roth, a very clever artist, illustrated the verses for us, and the resulting piece soon began appearing on English Department bulletin boards nationwide. It was also picked up and run by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*.

One year, *Kansas Monthly* found a fresh approach to a subject we're all familiar with—graduation. Editor Dan Reeder made commencement the peg for a masterful set of brief essays on one profession that, like all others, usually commences with graduation: journalism. The contributors were a not-altogether-starry-eyed senior, a professional-temporarily-turned teacher, columnist James Kilpatrick, and a journalistic gray eminence who had come full circle and, at 87, was seeking a Ph.D. in scholastic metaphysics.

Of course, not everyone has talented Ph.D.s joining the staff with smoldering masterpieces, nor campus domino kings, nor sterling music departments, nor thick FBI files and enterprising students to seek them out. But we all have access to stimuli.

And what helps us come up with the good subject—the *interesting* subject—so often is a chance to piggyback on someone else's idea, twisting it, extending it, shaping it to our own particular needs.

A list of possible poaching grounds is coming, but first, here's an example of piggybacking: A while ago, the *New York Times Magazine* ran a piece on using animals in scientific research. It was in some ways predictable—lots (if not all) of God's creatures pitted against those awful research scientists who use them in their laboratories. It's an important ethical question, this business of guinea pigs. Yet the *Times* scenario seemed a bit too pat, a bit too black and white.

There was something missing in the *Times'* treatment: The opinions of people who really care about animals and still use them in their research. In other words, veterinarians. Penn has a first-rate School of Veterinary Medicine. So we asked a writer to ask some of our veterinary faculty how people who treat animals feel about using them in their research. (Not entirely comfortable, it turned out.)

Incidently, that story began as a brief, front-of-the-book thing, but the writer discovered as he got into it that it could be a full-blown feature. The opposite can happen, too. You may think you have a feature and end up with something less. The writer is usually the best judge of this.

More stimulants

Now, in addition to the Sunday and Tuesday *Times*, you can be stimulated by the sheer imagination that goes into mounting the best news magazine of the air, "All Things Considered." It's on public radio five days a week in the early evening (there's a shorter weekend version), and it is, as they used to say, not to be missed. Though it is unfair to the program to cite as representative something as old and as frivolous as this, it's one of my favorite examples: When everyone else was talking about President Carter's toothy smile, "All Things Considered" went out and interviewed his dentist. It was a brilliant idea, no matter how unimportant. (ATC also uncovered some hanky-panky in the Supreme Court, and its producers were among the first to get onto the Karen Silkwood story.)

One of the great all-time stimuli for me was a segment from, of all things, *A Chorus Line*. There's a fascinating scene in the show when Cassie, a polished star-quality hoofer who could easily dance the night away alone, joins the line of other dancers trying out for a show. And, of course, her kick is a might too noticeable, her hat a bit too cocked—she doesn't fit in, and the director tells her so in no uncertain terms. She gets the point and gradually, before our very eyes, transforms herself from a star to a chorine.

That transformation is genuine magic, a moment that, like much else in this show, takes us behind the scenes to give us a look at someone else's technicalities. That is one of the things that makes the show so interesting—and that is also the journalistic lesson I took from it. In magazine feature writing, as on that stage, there is often no better way to get to the essence of the subject than to go behind the scenes and give the reader a glimpse of the subject's technicalities.

You can also get ideas from looking over something as prosaic as the monthly list of publications put out by the Superintendent of Documents at the U.S. Government Printing Office in Washington. Also try the fall and spring list issues of *Publishers Weekly,* which give the important forthcoming books, or a computer printout (or any other listing) of research that's taking place on your campus. Chat with your institution's department heads about research and other faculty doings in their disciplines. You can get an education of sorts from this, if not a good subject. And usually you can get that, too.

Reading just about anything else—especially the *New Yorker*—helps, too.

So does thinking.

Hello, Goodbye

How PR officers can survive presidential comings and goings

by Dixie Sheridan

A bitter choice confronted Jocelyn College President Maynard Hoar: Renew the contract of Professor Henry Mulcahy or face blackmail because of his own political views. President Hoar decided to resign. "I confess I thought of Samson, bringing down the temple on the Philistines and himself," he said.

Hoar and Mulcahy are inventions of Mary McCarthy, author of *Groves of Academe,* so we don't know how Jocelyn's PR director handled the resignation. But we do know that in real life, unless the president is going on to a smashing next job, a resignation or retirement is generally too complicated and too personal to explain *really.*

Remember the University of Oklahoma president who resigned for a new job in Los Angeles, returned before Oklahoma could appoint a successor, and then resigned again two years later? What about the University of New Mexico, where disagreements between the board of regents and the governor have resulted in four presidential searches since 1982?

Then there's Clemson University, where a conflict between the president and the board of trustees, fueled by athletic problems, led the president to resign on the spot during a board meeting.

"It was such big news, everyone got it at the same time we did," recalls Harry Durham, Clemson's associate vice president for university relations. "Ideally you would want to notify your major internal groups first and then go public. Sometimes you just don't have that option."

No guidelines can help in these unexpected situations that so often occur in the academic world. This is where, for the PR professional, creativity, thick skin, and Jack Daniels come in handy.

And, of course, as surely as you have a president resign, you'll soon have a new president to announce. That carries its own set of problems. But first let's look at what to do when your president plans to leave.

Resignation rules to live by

Presidents resign from colleges and universities in this country at a rate of approximately 300 a year. "It's like a change in monarchy," says James Lichtenberg, senior vice president at Hill and Knowlton. "The king is dead. Long live the king. The past, after all, is prologue."

For PR directors, the first rule in handling resignations is, "Don't panic" according to Jim Robjent, director of public information at Colby-Sawyer College. Taking a more self-protective stance or perhaps speaking from more experience, Ripon College Director of College Relations Andrew Miller advises, "Be on vacation that week."

But when you have the luxury of time to plan adequately and calmly, you can ensure success by following these strategies:

1. *Work with the outgoing president to decide how you'll make the public announcement.* The easiest way may be to call a news conference and invite campus people and the media. Plan what you want emphasized. Have the president and board chair available for media questions—if they can handle it. Help them anticipate all the questions, especially sensitive ones.

2. *Develop a news release to distribute at the news conference.* Clear your draft with the president and other key officials. It should include a summary of the resigning president's accomplishments, preferably stated in unequivocal terms by the chair of the board. "What the outgoing president and board chair say about the resignation has great impact on the kind of leadership transition you will have," observes Durham.

The release should also include a plausible reason for the resignation. This is easy if the president is going to a new job; it's harder if he or she is taking time off or retiring.

"Make sure there are no ambiguous statements in the news release or letters that might suggest a firing instead of a resignation," warns Ann Shanahan, former director of public relations at Smith College and now dean of admissions at Salem College.

Of course, no matter how straightforward the situation, a resignation always sends up red flags. Stating the reasons can be tough. It's not polite to cite reasons like boredom and fatigue. And it's insensitive to speak about mental illness, alcoholism, or sickness. So we have ritualistic language: "President Needsarest has fulfilled the objectives she and the board and administration set five years ago."

In your written announcement, give a date when the president will leave. If the person is *not* going on to another job, remember that the longer the notice given, the more likely people will believe that he or she is voluntarily

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resigning. Mention who will conduct the search for a new president, as well as how and when the search will occur. Include the name of the acting president if one is to be appointed.

Finally, "Make sure all questions relating to the resignation are answered in the announcement," says Walter Littell, director of Yale University's office of public information. "In other words, pre-empt the negatives."

3. *Make sure the president gives certain people the news face-to-face or by phone more than 24 hours before the public announcement.* This is especially crucial when the president is not leaving for six to 12 months. These important people include family members who may not yet know; administrators who report to the president; the president's secretarial and housekeeping staff; key faculty and others on campus who are friends; the trustees; the governor or other politicos (for public universities); major donors; and top volunteers. The president may have to make 30 to 50 calls the day before the announcement.

Mail letters, a newsletter, or news releases (whatever vehicle you choose) to graduates across the country the night before your announcement. "Work quickly so that it doesn't hit the local grocery before the alums hear," advises Robjent.

4. *Pay attention to timing.* This has lots to do with the success of your announcement. If you can manage it, don't make the announcement right after the president has a nasty fight with the faculty, a scathing attack in the student media, a sit-in, or a strike. People are too eager to speculate. Put the announcement on hold until things calm down.

Keeping it confidential

Some news items are leakier than others. A resignation or announcement of a new president is one of the most difficult to control, but it's important to do so. There's a lot to lose when inaccurate, incomplete, or speculative information is reported. So act as quickly as you possibly can.

Here's what to do to keep the news under wraps, whether you face a resignation or the announcement of a new leader:

- *Tell only those who have to know.* Your staff can do many tasks—labeling envelopes, for example—without knowing the reasons.

- *Type your own drafts of the news release until a final is approved.* It's not that you can't trust your secretary; it's the other people hovering around his or her desk all day who are loose-lipped. One exception reported from Edee Rohde, director of information services at the University of Alaska: "My secretary managed to create all the materials without anyone else knowing what she was working on."

Sometimes using staff in the president's office gives you more control; those desks are not usually as public as the ones in the PR office.

- *If material on candidates is being mailed to you, use your home mailing address.* For instance, you may need to receive photos or biographical material.

- *If you use the campus copy center, use it at night or on weekends with one trustworthy employee.* The greenest reporter knows to keep an eye on what's being copied.

- *If you need a printer, find one off the beaten track.* Again, this helps avoid having the news leak through people who happen to be in the print shop. As Ripon's Miller points out, "I trust our printer; the 999 people who go through his shop daily I don't."

- *To keep investigators on a short leash, give the media and the campus no more than 24 hours' notice that there will be an important announcement.* At least 50 percent will guess why a meeting is being called but won't have time to do damage.

In with the new

You may think the new president is the cat's meow, but hold on to your enthusiasm and remember: The announcement that you have a new president is not *ipso facto* news.

Lee Mitgang, education editor for Associated Press, says that only a handful of presidents are of interest to the national wires and the evening news, and usually those presidents come from the likes of Harvard and Yale. "The state wire will almost always carry your news, however," he says. "Otherwise, coverage depends on the case. For example, if a black were named president of Ole Miss, or Princeton chose a woman as its next leader, you can bet the media would take notice.

Two public relations consultants suggest that the first half-year of a new presidency is the optimal time for news coverage. Marcia Sharp, chair of Hager, Sharp, & Abramson in Washington, DC, says, "Assuming the person was selected because the person matched the search committee's vision for the future of the institution, concentrate on three or four of the themes that are central to that vision. You will have easier press calls in the first six months than you will ever have again."

"Highlight the background and interests of the person that fit into the college's strategy," advises Lichtenberg of Hill and Knowlton. "The press is likely to be responsive to the news of a new president, and the honeymoon lasts about six months."

New York Times Education Editor Ted Fiske offers this advice: "We're more interested in people coming than in people leaving. We're in the business of what's new. The best kind of story when you have a transition focuses on where the institution is in its own life. If you're pitching a story, pitch the institution."

Whether or not the nation cares, the one person for whom this news means the most is the new president. So do your work right. Concentrate on not alienating your in-house groups. Here are some steps to take before the announcement (and even before the selection):

- *Once you get word of the final choice, confirm with the search committee chair that all other nominees and finalists know the outcome.* Be sure as well to inform all administrators who report to the president as well as all trustees.

- *Arrange for a simultaneous announcement at the president-elect's former place of employment.* As a courtesy, you might want to have the PR director at the president's former place of employment see your news release before it's distributed.

- *In the release about the person chosen, include a statement from the chair about the search and the result as well as photos of the new person.* Get up-to-date photos, please, even though this is sometimes easier said than done. It may well require some clandestine photography and secret darkroom work.

- *Plan to hold a news conference.* Dan Jorgensen, director of the news service at St. Olaf College, suggests holding it in late morning or early afternoon. If that's impossible, 4 p.m. will allow you a chance for the 10 or 11 p.m. newscasts, he says.

Have the new and old presidents on hand as well as the board chair, if you can. The more public interaction between the outgoing and incoming presidents, the better the transition will be for those on campus.

- *Do what you can to help the president prepare.* "Brief the new president in advance of possible questions," suggests Elaine Justice, director of public information at the College of William and Mary.

Sharon Poff, Bucknell University's director of public relations and publications, agrees. "As a newcomer to your institution, the president needs your support and advice," she says. Be sure as well to plan what you want media coverage to emphasize about the new presidency.

- *Have your newsletter, news release with memo, or letter ready to mail the night before your public announcement.* Send the communications to key alumni, professional colleagues, and distant and national media who aren't interested in attending a news conference.

And, if you think it's time for a vacation after the news conference, think again. As veteran Harry Durham says, "Announcing a new president doesn't seem like much of a trick to me. However, presenting that person to key communications people and others *after* the initial exposure is a significant task."

The new president should meet with all constituencies on campus; community leaders; alumni; legislative leaders; and reporters *and* editors at local, state, and national media.

And so it goes—until the president resigns. But you know what to do then, right?

Marketing Your Own Iacocca

How you can get media mileage for your president

by Donald R. Perkins

We can learn a lesson from Lee Iacocca and the Chrysler Corporation. When Chrysler wanted to tell America about its financial turnaround, it called on its best spokesman—its president.

Your president may not have Iacocca's rough charisma, and you may not have the huge advertising budget required to put your chief executive on TV every night. But you and I can also successfully market our "product" by using our president as the top public relations figure. He or she can secure media attention that's impossible to get any other way.

Why use this strategy? Because public relations is, ultimately, the president's responsibility. The buck stops there. It is your president's voice that counts most.

Spotlighting presidents

My informal survey of 38 colleges and universities reveals that calculating the president's strengths and taking advantage of them is the secret of a successful program for presidential media exposure.

Carnegie Mellon's President Richard Cyert, for instance, has gotten major media attention based on his expertise in economics, business affairs, and business management.

"I try to market President Cyert within wide parameters instead of narrow specialties," says Keith Moore, vice president for university relations. Recently, a national magazine gave major play to Cyert's policy of giving corporate industry the patent rights to results of cooperative college-industry research projects.

Moore keeps his president in touch with the key newspaper and television people, often traveling with Cyert to Midwestern and Eastern cities.

During his tenure at Pennsylvania State, former President John W. Oswald visited with editorial boards of newspapers in Pennsylvania's major cities. The visits were arranged by Art Ciervo, then director of public information and relations. Oswald started each session with a brief update and then answered questions.

Ciervo wasted no time introducing new Penn State President Bryce Jordan to area media. He got Jordan to take time out from his first two "get acquainted" visits to campus to call on two area newspapers.

To market your president to the media, says Ciervo, you should make sure your president:

- is articulate;
- undergoes a dry run about what to expect;
- does his or her homework;
- offers fresh information; and
- knows what he or she says is on the record unless both parties agree otherwise.

Davidson College capitalized on the involvement of former President Samuel R. Spencer, Jr., in international education. Spencer, who subsequently became president of the Virginia Foundation of Independent Colleges, served as chair of the Board of Foreign Scholarships, which administers the Fulbright program. A White House meeting that Spencer attended gave John Slater, director of communications, an excellent opportunity to gain media attention for the college.

"Every time Dr. Spencer did something newsworthy in the area of international education, it gave us the opportunity to mention Davidson College's own program in the area," Slater says.

George Raymer, assistant executive director of university relations and communications at the University of Akron, takes advantage of President D.J. Guzzetta's fine speaking voice to place him in radio and TV interview situations and talk shows.

Raymer makes sure the media know they don't have to go through his office to contact the president for telephone or in-person interviews. "I believe such a policy aids greatly in marketing the president to the media,"

Donald R. Perkins is director of the office of public information at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio.

he says.

Pacific Lutheran University awards a "President's Medal" to draw attention to President William O. Rieke and the university. The award honors people who exemplify the college's ideals.

"We try to choose persons for the award who live in Northwest cities where visibility is important to Pacific Lutheran. Media exposure results for both the president and our school," explains Martin J. Neeb, executive director of university communications.

Clemson University has held 13 "Bill Atchley Wants to Meet You" sessions hosted by alumni throughout South Carolina. President Atchley tours key industries and communities with news media, and all attend a closing dinner.

"I think one reason the media exposure works so well is that the president is on their turf, visiting and talking with local people and local industries and organizations," according to Harry Durham, Clemson's executive director for university relations.

Ohio's economic problems provide an angle for Miami University President Paul G. Pearson to get media attention. Jim Langley, news bureau director, arranges situations in which Pearson can speak out on the important role of higher education in revitalizing the state's economy.

"We like to see him linked to the idea that colleges can play a major role in the state's economic turnaround," Langley comments.

The University of Notre Dame reaps extra media attention because many of its officials are articulate and often willing to "go public" with comments on timely issues, says Richard Conklin, director of information services.

When Father Theodore Hesburgh remarked at a football banquet that Notre Dame believes its players are students first, there was wide media response. "That's nothing new at Notre Dame, but the comments came at a time when we had had our first losing season in 18 years and there was widespread discussion of scandals in college athletics," Conklin says.

When University of Richmond President E. Bruce Heilman first took office, the news bureau director invited a local reporter to spend a day on campus with him to see how a new chief executive spent his time.

The UR staff discovered that sometimes joint ventures with other institutions can pay off in presidential coverage. When Heilman had been in office about a year, the news office arranged a luncheon at the National Press Club in Washington for Heilman and Thomas Graves, president of the College of William and Mary. The connection? Both were presidents with backgrounds in business administration who had recently taken over the leadership of old Virginia institutions. Putting the two presidents together attracted more representatives of national media than either would have alone.

Wittenberg's way

At Wittenberg, we have followed a detailed strategy to achieve media results for President William A. Kinnison.

Kinnison has written and spoken extensively on managing private higher education. He also serves on two commissions, one at the presidential level, which are exploring the future of higher education in America.

To capitalize on these assets, I put together a media kit listing his credentials, accomplishments at Wittenberg, and views on managing private higher education at a time when many private institutions are having major problems.

Whenever he is scheduled to speak in an area important to Wittenberg's fund-raising, enrollment, or general public relations efforts, I telephone or write to important media nearby.

I briefly describe Kinnison's background and offer an interview with him on the state of higher education in general and on what private education in particular is doing to solve its problems. I tell the editors and news directors that, if they are interested, a complete outline of the president's background and viewpoints will follow. I condense this information for TV and radio outlets.

I also offer to have the president go to the newspaper or the radio or TV station to make connections. The extra effort pays off. Usually, I am able to line up at least two interviews per area, sometimes more.

As head of a college affiliated with the Lutheran Church in America and recently named chair of the effort to merge three branches of this church, Kinnison is an authoritative spokesman on the merger and on the benefits to a college of being church-related.

These credentials, backed by a modified version of my presidential media ket, have made possible numerous interviews with religion editors of major newspapers, such as the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Boston Globe*, as well as some TV exposure. One national church magazine with a circulation of 650,000 featured Kinnison in a cover story.

I have placed several op-ed newspaper pieces by capitalizing on the marketability of my president's speeches, articles, and other writing. This has been one of our best ways to break into major media markets.

I contact editors of editoral pages and use my presidential media kit to help establish credibility. Depending on the length of the original manuscript, I either send the entire piece or shorten it without changing the original thrust.

Wittenberg alumni and members of our board of directors have helped me get major media attention for my president. When Kinnison spoke in Pittsburgh, an alumnus on Wittenberg's board who heads a Pittsburgh-based national company assigned a person from his corporate public relations staff to help me set up interviews.

Before the president's visit, I briefed the corporate PR expert about possible interview topics. Then he and I made media rounds. At each stop, I quickly reviewed the president's credentials and left the media packet. The executive vouched for the story possibilities that could come from any interview with my president. The results were excellent, capped by a lead story in a Sunday edition of a Pittsburgh daily.

Section 4
The Printed Word

Feature Writing

by Don M. Seaver

At several professional meetings in the past, I have heard the proposition that colleges and universities should go out of the news release business, that we should seek alternatives to get our story across.

Each of us faces a different situation regarding access to the media. For the school located in a large metropolitan center that is also a nerve center of the media, such as Washington, New York, and Chicago, I believe the suggestion may carry a degree of credibility. But for the majority of us, I think that a professional news release program should continue to be the foundation on which we build. Alternative routes to the media can be valuable, but it is the release program upon which we must depend for our day-to-day sustenance. I also believe that, when release programs fail, it is not due to any failure of the media, but to our own failure to meet the standards of writing and news judgment that the media establish for their own.

Further, I believe that feature stories offer the greatest opportunity for college information people to obtain more than routine coverage in the media. Campus spot news stories of truly widespread interest are few and far between. Feature stories, on the other hand, are bound only by the wide-ranging interests of our faculty, the ability to make these interests meaningful to the public, and our own imagination.

To grasp the potential of the feature story, I believe we need a clear understanding of the difference between the feature and the spot story.

The spot story is event-oriented, time-dependent or related; it must be moved today.

Traditionally, the feature is the human interest story, the one that depends on touches of human experience and that often arouses emotion. It is usually not event-dependent, although it may deal with emotional or human forces involved in a spot news event. It may also center on an event that, ordinarily, would not be of spot news potential. It is the tear-jerker, the sob story; to coin a phrase, it tugs at the heart strings. The spot story chronicles events that may change life. The feature mirrors life as it is.

The media in recent years have broadened the traditional concept of the feature story. It may include news analyses, backgrounders, and interview stories, among others. All of these offer fertile and sometimes unique opportunities to college information offices. With regard to the news analyses, we have the experts to give opinions on what news events mean and what they may lead to. In backgrounders, we have the experts to fill in technical and historical background, to provide material to put spot news events in perspective. The interview stories may cross the lines of both and go far beyond.

For our purposes, let's label features as any but the spot news stories; they are not time-dependent. Features have characteristics that impose certain burdens upon us if we are to use them well. Features require more imagination, better writing—or at least a different type of writing—and enterprise. Perhaps features are best labeled as enterprise stories.

Feature stories also imply a type of organization that sets them apart from the spot story. The old inverted pyramid style is still the format for most spot stories. The wire services, especially, continue to use this format, primarily because of space requirements and ease of editing. Individual papers tend to use this style less on the news stories they generate themselves.

The inverted pyramid style embraces the big bang theory of the universe. It starts with the most important fact in the lead, hits quickly with the major facts of the story, then expands and elucidates. It trails off into facts of lesser importance. It is easy to cut without critical editing.

In a feature, the lead may hit with a bang, but it does not tell the most important part of the story. It intrigues the reader to go farther. It grabs attention and signals that more action will follow. A series of small explosive mines may be planted throughout the body of the story. Ideally, it ends with a mild bang or twang of the heartstrings.

The general rules of feature writing are roughly the same as for any type, and it is easier to point out the don'ts than the dos.

- Underwrite rather than overwrite. Understatement in general is one of the most effective techniques. Avoid superlatives. If a person is famous, you don't need to say so. If something is outstanding, give the facts that lead to this conclusion and let them speak for themselves.
- Avoid the special language and jargon of your institution. Readers don't understand it.
- Avoid copious notes that fill space but say little or nothing.
- Do not be afraid of length. By their nature, features generally require more space. If the story is both worthwhile and well written, it usually will be successful.

Now that you have the feature, what do you do with it?

Because of their nature, it may be useful to pay close attention to some basics about the media to ensure more effective distribution.

Size of the newspaper's news hole will be important. Morning papers usually have the largest news holes in their Thursday and Friday editions, afternoon papers on Wednesday and Thursday, the days of the great grocery ads. (On such considerations does the relative importance of news hinge.) Sunday papers are larger, but generally have less open space. They require special consideration.

The topic of individual stories also may make them candidates for special distribution. Religion stories, for example, might be aimed for Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings when many newspapers provide some form of church coverage. Short, bright news features might be aimed for Monday morning papers. If I were a politician, I would always make announcements on Sunday afternoon when skeleton news staffs are scurrying to fill space with something more than wreck wrapups. Appropriate stories should

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be mailed to specialists, such as science, medical, religion, business, and education editors and reporters.

Features generally should be put in the hands of editors at least a day, and preferably two days, in advance of release times. Sunday features, those that go specifically to Sunday feature editors, shoud be put in their hands about a week in advance. Many Sunday feature editors lock up their sections several days before publication. Good art in the form of photos, line drawings, and maps should be available for every Sunday feature.

Art is vitally important with features. It gives an editor much more versatility in placing a story. If the editor has features of equal merit but only one with art, the one with art often will get the play simply because the editor needs to break up gray space.

A note of caution: Routine photos should not be sent with features. Avoid pictures of people in a line. Don't necessarily send a photo of the source for the story. Don't use pictures to please the source. Look instead for the eye-catcher to supplement the lead that intrigues.

What do people like to read about? A newspaper I once worked for conducted periodic readership surveys to find out what kinds of things interested people (and thus interested editors). I have seen results from other surveys since. The results are usually similar. People read stories about medicine, animals, and so on. But most of all, they read stories about people. This should give us a real clue to the potential impact of features.

At this point, I would like to include some leads from some feature stories that were written at Duke. While they do not represent the best (or the worst, I trust) in feature writing, they do illustrate some points about the potential value of features. All received significant usage in the media, including some radio and television time.

> DURHAM, NC—Omar the ring-tailed lemur—who usually tries to bite humans who stray too near—lazily lets his fingerprints be recorded for posterity.
>
> After all, the whole thing might shed light on some inherited problems.
>
> Clearly, it wasn't one of Omar's better days. Nor did Zanthippe and Plato seem very enthusiastic about the business at hand. All three were woozy from tranquilizing shots, harmless but easily capable of taking the starch out of a normally excitable primate.

From a scientific standpoint, the fingerprinting project at the Duke Primate Facility is a long way from being an important news story at this time. But one of our writers decided that the very act of fingerprinting these animals would make an interesting story if handled in a light, bright manner.

He was right. Accompanied by a good photo, the story earned national attention. In addition, we are assured a receptive audience if and when the researchers come up with findings that are newsworthy.

> DURHAM, NC—The man lying on his back on the table looks out from behind the oxygen mask, and the doctor tells him the next thing he feels will be slight pain in the neck.
>
> He turns his head to glance at the needle and, seeing that it is only a small one, resumes his stoic position staring at the ceiling.
>
> For this man already knows something about pain. He has been in an automobile accident . . .

This story dealt with a new camera, now only in the experimental stage, that can take a picture of the inside of a functioning human heart and flash the picture on a cathode ray tube with no invasion of the heart.

It is a long way from a medical breakthrough. But here the writer made real to the reader its potential value. He combined the people approach, the case history, with a good medical story. People who received the story got some ideas from it, and it received national attention.

> DURHAM, NC—The next time a four-letter word curls your hair, don't threaten to wash out the offender's mouth with soap.
>
> He—or she—may simply be expressing the human need for individuality in an increasingly regimented society, according to a Duke University scientist.

This story was based on an extremely technical study, but by adroit presentation, the writer succeeded in focusing on the part of public interest in a meaningful manner. Again, the result was widespread play.

> DURHAM, NC—Today is St. Patrick's Day, and whether or not you've got Irish blood, you may be wondering what all the hub-bub is about.
>
> Don't feel lonely. The Irish wonder the same thing.
>
> The annual St. Patrick's Day celebration is largely an American invention, according to Dr. Ferghus O'Foghludha, professor of radiation physics at Duke University Medical Center, a native Irishman and resident expert on the Emerald Isle.

A bit of imagination, a source with an obviously Irish name, and an upcoming holiday. Put together, they added up to a story that was picked up by the Associated Press and moved nationally.

We try to be big on holidays. Newspapers and other media work with small staffs. The papers often have heavy advertising and a lot of space to fill. They appreciate all the help they can get.

> DURHAM, NC—Where does the custom of the Christmas tree—the Tannenbaum of German legend—come from, and how far back does it go?
>
> According to reference librarians in Duke University's Perkins Library, putting an accurate finger on the exact point in time when Christmas trees came into general use in the home is difficult.

The writer went on to explain the symbolism of the Christmas tree, describe the largest one on record, and cover other interesting data. The feature was based entirely on his research, done with the help of Duke librarians. All it took was a little imagination and a library. A number of media outlets did indeed appreciate the effort.

Thus, features provide us with a vehicle to write about many things of importance to people, things that are not tied to an event or an occurrence at a certain time.

They relieve us of the necessity of awaiting events and provide us with an opportunity to stimulate news coverage that otherwise would not be available.

What's more, they enable us to present the human side of our institutions.

How to Improve Coverage

by Roger Yarrington

Consider these suggestions on how higher education representatives can help improve their institution's coverage in daily newspapers:

- Become more informed about how the press functions, what it considers news, the kinds of stories it seeks, and how it looks for human elements, issues, and events that affect readers' lives.
- "Come on downtown" more often, meet the editors, and help them understand how colleges work and the kinds of stories that are there.
- Keep up personal contact with reporters and maintain a constant flow of telephoned and mailed information on programs, research, trends, issues, problems, and improvements.
- Respond promptly and candidly when reporters request information.
- Provide story ideas based on the interesting happenings within the college, which educators too often take for granted.
- Speak English, and be more cogent, less defensive, and more willing to trust editors and reporters who must look at all sides of an issue.
- Help editors see what colleges' long-range goals are and how they benefit the community and state.
- Help reporters get to students for the local human interest material they need for stories.
- And, make the expertise of the faculty known to editors and then make that expertise available to reporters.

Roger Yarrington is assistant to the first presidency for communication at the Herald Publishing House in Independence, Missouri.

Guidelines for Visiting Newspaper Editors

by Arthur V. Ciervo

1. *Know the editor's mindset.* Newspaper editors, who are usually impartial, are moved by facts. They will support goals that will benefit the community rather than special interest groups. This holds true even on small newspapers where the editorial and business functions are in the same hands.

Editors divorce their editorial opinions from the pressures of friends and advertisers. To a large extent, they are immune to such pressures and often resent them.

Editors are used to dealing with different kinds of people and their manner is usually calm, reasoned, and straightforward. They respond best to a similar approach. They want to hear the facts and then be left alone to decide their approach.

2. *Don't visit at deadline time.* When you call for an appointment, know the paper's deadlines. Morning newspapers are on deadline during the evening hours, so visit the editor in midafternoon. Afternoon papers are on deadline in the morning, so visit sometime after lunch.

3. *Keep your visit short.* Stay no longer than 30 to 45 minutes.

4. *Take only one person with you.* You may want to take along a resource person who can supplement your presentation with facts about the issue you want to discuss.

5. *Keep your visit professional.* Present your case concisely. Don't overload the editor with too much reading material: He or she won't have time to read it. Leave editors with copies of the background information and the appropriate fact sheets.

6. *Don't pressure. Don't plead. Don't argue. Don't ask for favors or appeal to friendship.* Your efforts will backfire if the editor feels that you are approaching him or her as anyone other than a fair-minded, professional journalist who decides on editorials solely on the basis of facts and community impact.

7. *Present the local angle.* Remember that editors want to know the impact of your issues on the community. Be prepared with facts and figures.

8. *Call for help in areas where you lack expertise.* If the editor asks a question during your visit that you can't answer, promise to get back immediately with the information.

9. *Conclude your visit graciously.* After you have presented your case, the editor may or may not give you a commitment on doing an editorial. If the answer is yes, thank the editor and offer to provide any additional information that is needed. If the editor is unsure, thank him or her and ask if you may call in a few days to inquire about the decision.

If the editor opposes doing an editorial, thank him or her and add that you'd like to send materials from time to time in the hope that the editor will see some merit in your cause in the future. Keep in mind that you and your campus need to maintain a good relationship with the local editor. He or she may turn down this editoral but agree to do one on another subject later.

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Special Delivery

Such specialized publications as Opera News, Gourmet, *and* Forbes *can help bring your institution's story to targeted audiences*

by Phil Zimmer

Some time ago I painstakingly researched *Forbes* magazine in hopes of placing a story. I sent the magazine a query letter and back-up information on Chautauqua's business-like approach to marketing and funding the fine arts. But my optimism took a nosedive a few days later, when I called the writer I'd targeted.

"You do read *Forbes,* don't you?" he asked in a chilly voice. "Then you know that it's for *business* people. Just why would my editors be interested in the cultural center at Chautauqua?"

"You know," I said, thinking fast, "you could be right. Your editors might not be interested in the story."

A pause. I had agreed with him. *Now* I had his undivided attention.

"But if you were to run it by them," I asked, "what do you think their major objections would be?"

He quickly pointed out that *Forbes* focuses on business problems and opportunities, not on nonprofit organizations. I countered by explaining how the decline in government funds for cultural programs is prodding more fine arts organizations to adopt business-like practices while seeking outside support.

More and more of us in fine arts, I said, are approaching business leaders. And the more *Forbes* readers knew about the workings of a successful cultural organization like Chautauqua, the better able they'd be to evaluate the proposals landing on their desks.

The conversation swung back and forth for a few minutes until the writer promised to talk to his editors and get back to me if anything developed.

Develop it did. My frank conversation with the writer enabled us to pinpoint and resolve possible objections to the story idea. Within a week he was on the phone again, making hurried arrangements to come up and do what turned out to be a well-written feature showcasing Chautauqua's business-like management style.

Not every story pitch has such a happy ending. And my efforts took time, something that's in short supply for all of us. But *Forbes'* 700,000-plus readers are just the kind of people who might be potential Chautauqua visitors and donors. And *Forbes* is only one of dozens of specialized publications you, as well as I, can cultivate to increase regional or national awareness of an institution.

Even those of you in small shops can justify targeting specialized media if the effort helps meet your overall PR goals. You don't have to place lots of stories. One or two a year may be enough to make a difference in your media relations success.

The big payoff

An informal survey I did showed that some campus PR offices are already sold on marketing articles to specialty magazines. And why not? The proliferation of this kind of periodical has opened a "whole new field for enterprising professionals," notes Don Perkins, director of public information at Wittenberg University.

"The payoff is in the increased stature for your institution, its professors, and its president."

Here are some benefits of marketing articles to these publications:

• *You can reach your target audiences with your institution's message.* An article in the right publication can help you influence important people, says Sharon Poff, director of public relations at Bucknell University. A recent article in *Money* magazine, for example, listed Bucknell as one of the top 10 business schools in the country. Poff notes that this recogition has helped Bucknell's management department recruit both faculty and students.

At state or land-grant institutions, there's added incentive to reach constituents. Jerry Leslie, agricultural news editor at South Dakota State University, has worked hard to place stories in such regional magazines as *Dakota Farmer* and *Tri-State Livestock News.* "Our payoff is in keeping our clientele informed," he notes. "To answer their questions and to get their support at budget time in the state legislature is important. If we serve them, they take care of us."

Church-related institutions can reach their special constituents through church publications. For instance, Georgetown University recently placed a feature on novelist Graham Greene in Catholic media across the nation, notes Anne Klass, director of public relations for Georgetown's main campus. The feature covered a campus visit by Greene, who, though outspoken on Catholic issues, rarely makes public appearances.

Interestingly, Klass also targets stories to Jewish media to inform readers about Jewish life at Georgetown and make them aware of the university's Judaic-Hebraic studies program.

• *Your recruitment marketing receives a boost.* An institution can include quotes from such prestigious publications as *Opera News* and *Musical America* in recruitment literature, says John Harvith, director of news services at Oberlin College. And coverage in such highly regarded speciality publications generates credibility for the institution.

• *Other major media pay attention.* You get a ripple effect from specialized publications because beat writers from national media read them for story ideas of their own, says Don Hale, assistant vice president for university relations at Carnegie Mellon University.

Placing a story once can make your next pitch to a national magazine easier. After all, says Dina Dorich, director of public relations at Trinity University, when one publication in effect legitimizes a story idea, the story becomes more credible to other media. For instance, she recalls an article in the *Christian Science Monitor* about Trinity's special program for future teachers. That article helped stir CBS's interest in including the Trinity program in a broader network feature.

Perfect pitch

To get results, you need to learn to pitch your stories quickly but well. This can take as little as five minutes at the computer keyboard and two min-

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utes on the phone. As Don Hale notes, the time commitment depends in part on the quality of your news judgment and writing ability.

At Chautauqua, we follow six basic steps to entice reporters at specialized publications to write features about us. Even though none of these steps takes us out of the office, our systematic approach has resulted in major features in such diverse publications as the *Chronicle of Higher Education, House Beautiful,* and *Gourmet,* to name just a few.

Here are our steps:

1. *Persistently peruse publications.* Begin today to read everything you can get your hands on. My early-morning reading of *Forbes* triggered the interest in getting a story in its "Faces Behind the Figures" section.

2. *Thoroughly research each publication.* Dig through back issues of specialty publications to spot trends that editors may feel are important. Also call the magazine's advertising department to request an advertising media kit. It will give you useful insights into the readers' demographics and psychographics, including age, education level, income, and even political affiliation.

Check with your reference librarian and with such publications as *Bacon's Publicity Checker* and the *IMS/Ayer Directory of Publications* to get other information. *Bacon's* extensive category headings and its systematic updating make it particularly helpful.

Your research should help you clarify your precise story angle and the best person to approach at each publication. Be sure to double-check the person's name and title before you make your pitch.

3. *Develop specific story proposals for each magazine.* Your pitch should focus precisely on the needs and interests of each magazine.

"Realize that, for just about every news or feature story you do, there's a specialty publication that will be interested," advises Dale Allison, director of news services at the University of Alabama. "Sometimes there's a whole list of them. Use *Writer's Market* or *Gebbie Press All-in-one Directory* to stimulate your thinking about different outlets for your stories and to research promising publications."

Look at stories you're already doing for mass circulation publications and consider giving them different slants to appeal to different specialty publications. Allison suggests, for instance, that you pitch a story about a new way to teach reading via computer to parents' magazines, to teaching publications, and to popular computing magazines. Make certain, of course, that the publications' audiences don't overlap. You don't want editors of competing magazines to receive similar stories from you.

4. *Send a well-written, one-page query letter.* Include relevant supporting materials and send the packet via overnight carrier. Indicate in your letter that you will place a brief call on a specific date, usually a day or two after the packet arrives.

5. *Follow through on the date mentioned with an upbeat phone call.* Be brief, friendly, and helpful when talking to the editor or writer.

6. *Truly listen to how writers respond to your story idea.* Pay attention to what the writer or editor is saying—or not saying, through pauses and voice inflections. Trust the expert's news sense as you work toward a common ground on the story concept. The important thing, says Don Pattison, director of public affairs at Pomona College, is to show a willingness to work cooperatively and, if necessary, to rethink the idea.

Pattison recalls, for example, pitching a personality profile of a 96-year-old professor emeritus of geology. The *Los Angeles Times* picked up the story idea and turned it into a news feature on the geology of the region, using the professor's comments and insights.

"We're very flexible in working with writers," Pattison says. "Sometimes we push them and sometimes they push us as the story concept develops during brainstorming sessions."

The crucial ingredient

One of the most important parts of your pitch is the query letter. It's your main chance to focus on why your story idea is important to the publication, its readers, and others in our society. To write a query letter that will get read, you should:

- *Be concise.* A one-page letter is most likely to be read. Boil down your story idea into one or two simple, declarative sentences that busy editors and writers can grasp quickly.
- *Write the letter with the publication's particular audience in mind.* Include not just the right angle but also the right level of information, Allison recommends. Specialty publications will probably require greater detail and perhaps technical data.
- *Do your homework.* Include relevant clips or other backup material that will make your idea attractive. Dorich also recommends providing leads on other contacts who may have a similar story to tell.
- *Above all, be sure your idea is solid.* Few magazines are interested in writing on the broad topic of how wonderful your campus or your president is. To attract an editor's attention, focus instead on a new or compelling idea that relates to your campus. Then show how that idea fits into a broader issue or trend.

Once you've sold an editor or writer on a story idea, move quickly to get that person in contact with the primary source. Perkins always provides a short bio with the source's home and office phone numbers. You might also offer photographs and assist with travel logistics. Be as helpful as you can without hovering.

Above all, think big. Aim for *Fortune, Science 86,* and *National Geographic* as well as your local or regional magazines. With experience, you'll only get better.

Supplement Your Coverage

There's a new market for your releases in newspaper special editions

by Dick Jones

For years, newspaper supplements were the stepchild of the newsroom. Editors considered them throwaways. Focused on topics such as car care and home improvements, the supplements existed for one reason only—to sell advertising.

All this has changed now that these sections are rapidly becoming more substantive. But many public information directors haven't gotten the word. Most make little effort to reach these sections. And that's a mistake.

When I was in the public information office at Pennsylvania State University, we targeted news features to newspaper special supplements beginning in 1979. We found that these sections were moderately sophisticated attempts to match specific audiences with good news stories about these audiences' interests.

Ad sales are still paramount, of course. Why not? That's a major reason why most newspapers exist. Increasingly, however, supplements are becoming more readable.

Supplements need you

Making supplements more readable is where you come in. Editors rarely have enough stories for their special editions. Staffers have good intentions, but, except at large papers, they usually can't spare enough time from day-to-day duties to produce strong editorial copy. Even giant metro papers will welcome your features more often than you think.

Car care and home improvement editions still abound, of course. So do other standbys, such as bridal supplements and back-to-school tabs. There are new faces in the crowd, however —sections on cameras, home computers, the hunting or fishing season, careers, higher education, travel, you name it. Clearly, any institution, no matter how small or specialized, has faculty who would be good sources for features in these sections.

Start with a survey

At Penn State, we wanted to develop a systematic and cost-effective way of gaining visibility in special sections. In January 1982, we conducted a statewide survey of all daily newspapers to learn which published special editions and to find out copy deadlines. Editors could respond with business reply cards printed by the university business services office. Incidentally, using business reply cards is less expensive than sending double post cards because you pay postage only on returned cards.

On the back of the cards we had printed: "Editors: News features from Penn State can enhance your special tabs this year. We'd like to know what special editions you plan for the rest of 1982. Please circle the appropriate ones and fill in the copy deadline. Even better, mail us your list of special tabs."

The tab topics listed on the card included bridal; careers; education; hunting; energy; home improvement; senior citizens; outdoors/recreation; and farm, home, and garden.

We left two lines for editors to pencil in other special editions. Finally, we asked them to fill in the name of the contact who should receive material for special editions, his or her title, and the name of the newspaper.

Based on the response, which was just under 50 percent, we planned the special editions program for two years.

While there are some changes from year to year in the special editions that newspapers run, there aren't enough to justify a survey every year. Once a paper finds a money-making special edition, the special edition usually runs annually.

When a newspaper special edition deadline approached, I often called the editor in charge to see what kind of stories Penn State could provide. If the special section concerned a topic our faculty experts could address, we usually responded quickly. For example, when the *Philadelphia Inquirer* published a special section on baby care, we contributed four articles by covering the views of child development professors.

When we started our story-producing project, we did a phone survey to find out the most common special editions. We identified four in which we had good faculty sources. Then we wrote stories, assembled them in packets, and mailed them to the appropriate papers.

Dale E. Reich, director of news and publication services at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, has another technique he uses for back-to-school editions. He writes a cover letter to about 40 newspapers asking if they want stories on different topics about UW-Whitewater. The letter has a checklist of some two dozen topics, such as life in the dorm, services for the disabled, and financial aid.

About one-third of the papers responded to the offer the last time he wrote, Reich says. Each of the two dozen story topics was requested at least once. "Our savings, of course, were in labor, duplicating, paper, and postage," he says.

By pre-selecting the mailings, he saves time and effort for both the information office and editors. If you are at a small, regional institution, your best strategy may be to telephone local editors. In an hour or two, you can do a year's research on special editions.

Special editions, special editors

One thing you'll probably find through your calls is that some papers have full-time editorial coordinators for special editions. Such coordinators are mostly at large dailies, but some work for smaller papers. The special sections editor, often located in the paper's ad department, represents a new breed of media gatekeeper.

Harold Barkhimer, features editor of the *Johnstown Tribune-Democrat* in Pennsylvania, is fairly representative of special section editors. Much of his job consists of planning the editorial direc-

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tion of special advertising supplements. He also directs the daily and Sunday "accent" pages.

"It's pretty hard to find fresh copy for the supplements," he says. "Good photos are especially hard to get. That's probably our biggest problem.

"We're always looking for interesting items. No, I don't see many features from college information services, and, yes, I would like to."

Another plus for aiming your features at special sections is that you get a chance to offer releases you already have on hand. A story on careers for women in engineering, for example, received almost no pickup when we sent it in a general mailing. But a large city paper's career tab used that same release in a slightly updated form almost a year later. The added bonus was that the section aimed at people interested in career options.

We have recycled our share of news releases in this way, although we much prefer to write fresh features. In all cases, the stories you send should be top-notch.

Remember—the special section market offers:

- an opportunity to target a specific message to a specific audience, the kind of thing we should be doing more frequently anyway;
- a largely untapped way to gain newspaper space, no small feat considering the shrinking news-hole of many dailies; and
- an effective method for getting the biggest bang for both our buck and our effort.

Don't think of the supplement market as a stepchild. Make if a full-fledged member of the family.

Tap into the Wires

How to use the wire services to tell your institution's story

by Dick Jones

In fall 1982, University of Scranton sophomore Peggyanne Reilly bet a professor that she could give up watching TV for a year. In 1983, Reilly won that bet—and saw her story written up in *USA Today,* the *Miami Herald,* and other major newspapers across the country.

Editors and readers were naturally intrigued by the tale of how Reilly abandoned TV and got both new self-confidence and a fresh view of how much society depends on the tube. But no one would have heard of that story if the Philadelphia bureau of the Associated Press hadn't put the news out on its national wire.

And AP wouldn't have heard about it if we in the University of Scranton's public relations department hadn't made a conscious effort to offer news to AP, United Press International, and other national wire services.

The way we see it, a story on the wires puts our name before editors and news directors at media outlets all over our state and region. If the story is good enough, it may even go out across the nation.

But obviously, we aren't the only ones who can capitalize on the wire services. According to Steven Ginsburg, a UPI reporter in Washington, DC, just about every campus has the raw material for a national wire story.

"Whether it's a community college or Harvard, there should be some good stories around," says Ginsburg, who was formerly with UPI's Scranton bureau. "Colleges have a wealth of story potential. There are students doing unusual things and professors with unique ideas."

To get these potential stories onto the wires, you need the same basic ingredients that qualify you for any kind of media relations work: sound news judgment, the ability to write clearly, and a dash of tact.

The cost-benefit question

Right now you may well be thinking that you have plenty of judgment and skill; what you lack is the time to work with the wire services.

This is an important consideration, especially in a small PR operation. In our two-person office, we estimate that it takes a full working day for one of us to produce a simple wire service feature. A story that's complex or has more than one source takes longer.

But think how cost-effective wire coverage is. If the wires use your story, many local, regional, and national media may pick it up with no extra effort on your part. And the impact of the national wire coverage that grows out of these features pays great dividends. National attention can:

- create a positive climate for development—particularly in reaching potential donors who live outside our immediate area;
- give alumni and other constituents reinforcement that our university is an important place, one that's viewed as such in the competitive arena of the media;
- help reach families of students and prospective students outside our area, which supplements our contact with these groups; and
- emphasize to the local media our institution's importance and perhaps even encourage increased and improved local coverage.

You have to decide for yourself, of course, whether achieving major visibility fits into your institution's and your office's goals. But it's definitely proved worthwhile for us.

Where to look for material

If you decide to tackle the wires, don't despair if your institution is more committed to teaching than to research. There's no doubt that a research project makes a good news story, but you can find news at a liberal arts institution, too. Here are some ideas to get you started.

1. *Look to your students.* Last year, sophomore and ham radio buff John Sullivan discovered by accident that ham radios can pick up cordless phone conversations. He found out, too, that the AM band of regular radios

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can pick up conversations from some of the older cordless phones. When he overheard some illegal business dealings, Sullivan realized that the speakers weren't aware that anyone could tap in.

In response to our feature, a UPI reporter checked with the Federal Communications Commission, and found that the FCC—but not the general public—knew about the phenomenon. UPI's national story highlighted Sullivan's concerns about phone users' privacy. *Our Senior Weekly Reader* and several other publications picked up our story.

Ask your student affairs office for tips about interesting students like this one. The admissions office may also be able to help.

2. *Check out your faculty.* John McInerney, an English professor and film critic, found that horror movies had changed perspective over the past 30 years. In the 1950s and '60s, audiences cringed along with the victim as the monster/alien/vampire/zombie gave chase. Today, though, many filmmakers shoot horror films from the monster's perspective. They ask audiences to identify with the killer, not the victim.

This finding sounded like a Halloween feature to me, and it was. After AP picked up the story, McInerney's views appeared in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (complete with a file photo of Godzilla to illustrate the story).

One caution: Your faculty expert must really be an expert. Don't try spotlighting anyone who's not really first-rate or your story will clink like a counterfeit coin.

3. *Cover VIP speeches and visits.* When actress Glenda Jackson completed a month-long guest faculty post at the University of Scranton, there were no wire service reporters around. But I was. We produced and sent a brief story to AP about her comments on the teaching experience. The piece turned up in many Sunday papers around the country.

Go to your campus events and cover talks by distinguished visiting lecturers as if you were a reporter, because in this context you are. If wire editors learn that they can depend on you for accurate, tightly written stories on celebrities and events, your institution will reap the rewards.

Here's another caveat, though. Don't try this if you're addicted to puffery. A speech story is no place to squeeze in a sentence or two about how great your institution is. Come to think of it, puffery doesn't belong in *any* potential wire story.

Remember, also, that your story's subject must be of interest to a wide audience. If your campus speaker is an unknown assistant undersecretary for paperwork, no matter how erudite the speaker is, the story won't attract a wire service editor. Wire stories on speeches usually center on folks with recognizable names.

4. *Don't neglect research.* Even if yours is a teaching institution, you may be surprised by the amount of scholarship going on. Try to keep up with it. Ask to see any faculty papers, book chapters, and journal articles. These may make good news features.

Getting wired

Basically, this is what we do to create a wire story: Interview the source, write a draft, and review the draft with the source for factual accuracy. After making the necessary changes, we send out the story.

Personal contact, of course, helps bring the story to editors' attention. This can be a letter, a phone call, or—if you're near a wire service bureau—a visit. Remember, though, that the story must be good enough to sell itself once the editor knows about it.

Let's say the wire service editor decides your story has potential. You can expect a wire service reporter to interview your source and write the story. Rarely will your feature go out over the wire without some changes.

So consider the story you send out as an extended query letter of the sort that a free-lance writer would use to interest an editor. For that reason, be sure you include information on how to reach your source. Give home as well as office numbers.

After the wire reporter has written the story, the editors will decide whether it's a regional story only or worth putting on the national wire.

"If the story has some universal appeal, it stands a chance of being a national or even international story," says UPI's Ginsburg. "If its appeal is limited to a geographic region, it won't make it past the state wire."

Incidentally, if your potential wire feature gets turned down, don't junk it. Consider sending it as an exclusive to a newspaper or a trade or professional magazine. And don't forget to consider it for campus publications.

Still not convinced?

According to our admissions office, our strong Division III athletic program offers Scranton a marketing edge in recruiting students. So to help publicize that program, we developed a story about the best player on our women's basketball team. Deanna Kyle was married, had a 2-year-old son, worked part-time as a United Parcel Service loader—and still maintained a 3.3 grade point average.

A major UPI feature about Kyle led to a *USA Today* story and photo. The student-athlete concept couldn't have received better play.

If you haven't considered wire coverage lately, take a closer look. It may be just the route your institution should take to achieve regional and national attention.

The Well-bred Op-ed

Increasing your institution's exposure in the press

by George T. Richard

If you're looking for more ways to get your institution into the newspaper, why not try an op-ed program?

The op-ed page, located opposite the editorial page, contains articles of opinion and commentary. Some may be by syndicated columnists, but others are by plain old intelligent people with something interesting to say.

The space is available. And with some planning and organization, you can claim a share of it for your institution. At the College of Wooster, we have op-ed pieces going to 135 Midwestern newspapers, 100 of them dailies. We place about 15 articles a year. Many of them appear in papers that would almost never run a news story about our college because we are too far out of their circulation area. We currently send op-ed pieces to newspapers only, but are planning to offer pieces on a regular basis to radio and television talk shows as well.

What's in it for you

If you need more convincing, here are some of the reasons why you should institute an op-ed program.

1. *Many newspapers are looking for op-ed material.* They're hungry for well-conceived, well-written pieces.

2. *You will be able to communicate with people on a high intellectual plane.* Sure, it's great to win football games, but the main activity of your college or university is learning. Here's an opportunity to showcase some of the fine minds at your institution.

3. *The placement of the articles is superb.* People who read op-ed pages are the most thoughtful portion of a newspaper's readers. They are an important audience for education.

4. *You will be able to obtain exposure in geographic areas where your school would not normally receive coverage.* Proximity may determine whether a newspaper covers news from your institution, but it doesn't restrict your chances of placing opinion and commentary pieces.

5. *If you use your head, you can open up entirely new avenues of coverage for your school.*

Starting a program

Should you target specific publications or aim for a broader area? I say no to both. Think big. Use a subscription basis. Write to op-ed editors and tell them what you plan to do. Outline the services you can provide and how often you can provide them. Ask editors to indicate their preferences. Should you send stories and biographic information on the author? How about photos? (When I queried newspapers about their preferences, 73 said they wanted articles and biographies of the authors; 57 wanted articles, bios, and photos; and only five said they wanted articles only.) When you write to editors, be sure to enclose a response card.

The important thing is to make the newspapers request the service. That way you can save time and money, and the newspapers will expect and look forward to receiving your material. Finally, if the newspapers ask for them, the pieces will receive more than a cursory screening when they arrive. From then on, the newspapers control when and if they use your material.

Probably the largest stumbling block to an effective op-ed program is developing faculty interest and participation. Don't expect spontaneous faculty enthusiasm. Don't even look for modified rapture. To faculty members, it's going to look like one more task on top of an already unbearable workload.

Start promoting cooperation by having yor president announce the program in a letter to the faculty. The academic dean should endorse the program in another letter. Then the responsibility for getting high quality articles is yours. You need to:

- develop possible topics;
- match those topics with faculty members who can comment authoritatively on them;
- take your ideas to the faculty members and sell them on their merits; and
- prod faculty members to complete the project, but be careful not to be so pushy that you alienate them.

It's really not as hard as it sounds. When you use a little imagination, potential topics become obvious. Here are some tips:

- Read your newspapers and news magazines to pick up timely topics; don't forget to scan letters to the editor.
- Monitor your state and federal legislative schedule for emerging issues.
- Keep an eye out for trends: resurgence of cults, growth of socialized medicine, national change to the metric system, and so on.
- Watch for significant annual events such as tax time and elections, and learn what issues surround them.
- Watch for anniversaries—bombing of Hiroshima, the Attica uprising—and special weeks or months. Just before Black History Month we sent out an op-ed piece on the contributions of blacks to classical music. We added a cover note calling editors' attention to the connection.
- Check out your faculty lectures and convocations. Some may have excellent potential. Even visiting speakers may yield an idea for an article.
- Check your speakers bureau listings for topics and consult your faculty expertise list. When I noticed that a political science professor was lecturing on nuclear disarmament, I asked him to develop an op-ed piece on "Nuclear Disarmament: How Much Is Enough?"
- Find out which faculty members are on leave and what they're doing. Remember, they're under pressure to publish. We coaxed two professors of German on leave in Europe to supply us with two op-ed pieces. Although the topics of their formal investigations were not marketable, they provided a solid piece on the reactions of the Germans to U.S. presidential elections and on the possible rebirth of Nazism in Germany.

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- Keep a sensitive ear to the ground for new and useful topics when you are interviewing faculty members on your regular rounds.

A note of caution: Be careful about selecting issues in which the writer's opinion might be construed as a college endorsement. That doesn't mean you should shy away from controversial areas. Actually, your best stories may be on these topics. Just be a little sensitive. In these cases, you might try using a point/counterpoint approach with two faculty writers. It lets people know not only that your faculty are bright and well-informed, but that debate and difference of opinion are still alive and well on your campus.

We placed a point/counterpoint piece by two faculty authors on the advisability of reviving the draft. One editor said he later referred to it and quoted the authors extensively in subsequent articles he wrote on the topic. This was an unsolicited, spontaneous compliment from an editor more than 100 miles away who had no reason to care about our institution.

The secret is judgment. I've had only one article that read like a crank letter. When that happens, don't hesitate to decline using the piece. But make sure you tell the faculty member precisely what the problem is. He or she may yet come back with a better article.

You can build a successful op-ed program with as few as six good ideas each year. The most important thing is to be regular. If you say you will supply an article on the first of the month, or on the first and 15th, or every Monday, deliver! Be sure to fulfill all your commitments.

We send the same op-ed pieces to every newspaper on our subscription list. Since these newspapers are spread so far apart geographically, there is little problem with overlapping coverage. The newspapers are aware that others are receiving the same information, and most of them don't mind.

However, if a paper insists on exclusivity, I honor that policy. Once the *Akron Beacon Journal* scheduled an op-ed piece but killed the placement after the *Canton Repository* ran the same article. I explained to *Journal* editors that our service provides equal access to the articles; after that, the newspapers are on their own. But I told them if they were interested in a particular piece, I would ask the author to rework it or take a slightly different angle solely for them. They are comfortable with that approach.

When we come up with a truly exceptional piece, I also send it to an alternate mailing list that includes another 60 newspapers in the major population centers of the country and in our targeted marketing areas. If any of these newspapers prints the article, the extra effort is well worth it.

Important fringe benefits to the program are the potential uses of reprints of your articles. Here's how you can reap those benefits:

1. *Send reprints to specialty editors.* One such piece led to several feature stories and a UPI story-of-the-year award for one of the writers. After our op-ed article on cults appeared, I sent it to religion editors and suggested interviews with the author. That led to a whole new round of coverage.

2. *Give copies of reprints to your development staff.* They know which trustees and major gift prospects might appreciate reading a certain piece.

3. *Leave reprints or clippings in your admissions office.* A prestigious placement can show the quality of your faculty to prospective students. Also make them available to your admissions staff and alumni/admissions recruiters to take on the road.

4. *Don't be shy.* Hang reprints in the faculty lounge. Faculty members are competitive by nature; your clips may inspire others to participate.

5. *Finally, include reprints when you make additional mailings to expand your subscription list.* Newspapers that see other papers using your service will be more interested in it themselves.

An effective op-ed program could become a valuable addition to your total communications effort.

Harvesting Your Prof Crop

Nine tips for launching an op-ed program

by Joseph L. Bennett

With the ideas and opinions that flourish in a college environment, you can develop a successful op-ed program as naturally as grapes turn into fine wine. But just as the winemaker has to control conditions to assure quality, you must carefully manage your program. If you simply let nature take its course the results may go sour.

This doesn't mean op-ed articles are harder to write and market than news. But they *are* different. If you've decided to launch an op-ed program, here's some advice from an office that began one from scratch.

1. *Emphasize opinion.* The natural tendency of many faculty members is to analyze an issue but to avoid taking a position on it. This dooms the piece with most editorial page editors. They are looking for fresh viewpoints, not more information. Make sure your authors understand this before they start writing.

2. *Beware the ego game.* Once you invite someone to write an article, you've asked for a considerable investment of time and effort. If he or she produces something that's badly written, disorganized, and far too long, it's up to you to salvage the effort—and the relationship. The best atmosphere is one of mutual respect: You respect the author's expertise and intellect; he or she respects your professional skill and editorial judgment. Be sure neither of you loses sight of the common goal: producing a piece that will be printed.

What do you do if a writer refuses to make changes you think are necessary? Explain that your office cannot market the piece in its present condition, but that the writer is welcome to do so. You may even suggest publications he or she might try. The impor-

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tant thing is to avoid offering an inferior product through your program.

3. *Sell your success.* When we started the program at Purdue, we sent a memo to department heads asking them to encourage their faculty to participate. Very little came of this.

Our first success came from people we identified and approached on our own. Once bylines began to appear in the Indianapolis and Chicago papers, interest picked up. Subsequent successes in the *Washington Post* and *Science* magazine got even more attention. We still have to solicit articles—and we always will—but many are coming in spontaneously. More important, we are developing a "stable" of dependable writers who have tasted success, know how the process works, and are getting better with experience.

4. *Don't be proprietary.* The op-ed program exists for faculty members who, for various reasons, haven't channelled their ideas to the media. Some, however, may write and successfully market articles on their own. These people don't need you, and you should not insist on helping them. Let them know the program is available, if they want to take advantage of it. But don't regard them as dangerous and subversive if they decline the offer. They're getting the job done without your help.

5. *Screen your experts.* A professor of nuclear physics may have firm and intelligent opinions on the latest welfare cuts, but he or she has no business airing them under your letterhead. Your writers' opinions have validity because of their professional association with your institution; they should stick to their areas of academic expertise.

6. *Remember your local media.* We aim our op-ed program primarily at national media, but many articles are suitable for local and university publications. These articles make local editors happy because they provoke a dimension that didn't exist before. They also serve an important psychological function: The authors' friends and families see them. Local publication also may help stimulate more participation from your faculty.

7. *Give credit.* As soon as an article appears, send a copy to the writer, his or her department head, and dean. Our office has an arrangement with the president of the university. When an op-ed article appears, we send him a copy, and he sends the writer a congratulatory note.

8. *Know your markets.* Read the op-ed pages of the publications you're approaching. Learn the kinds of pieces they prefer, the lengths they'll accept, how much biographical information on authors they print, and whether they run the writers' pictures. Know whether the publications insist on exclusives for op-eds (many do), and stay in touch with the editors.

After sending an article, follow up with a phone call in about a week. This not only gets you information on the piece in question, it lets you talk to the editor, find out what his or her preferences are, and why the publication accepted or rejected your last offering. When one publication turns down your article, send it immediately to another.

9. *Emphasize quality.* Never send an op-ed piece to a publication unless you think it has a legitimate chance of being published. It must fit the format and meet the editor's standards of quality. The most important ingredient of the program is the respect editors have for the material you send them.

Homeward Bound

News travels fast with computerized hometown releases

by Barbara B. Petura

Until recently, the hometown news release was the most tedious job of the college news service. That's because hometowners required such massive effort for such minuscule return.

But now, with computers so common in the news bureau, hometowners are easy. And along with that ease, they're getting a lot more respect.

Just ask Dave Price, director of college information at Plymouth State College in New Hampshire. Price releases more than 1,000 student hometown stories a year—in addition to individualized graduation and honor roll releases.

"Computers have revolutionized the process of preparing hometowners," Price says. His staff no longer spends hours typing endless variations on standard stories. Instead, he says, "we use our word processors to merge data on individual students with a basic 'shell' story and let the printer run out the individual versions—often during lunch hours."

In turn, PR people like Price are rediscovering just how useful those little releases can be. Time and again, hometowners prove a favorite with both the newspapers that receive them and the families that read them. And these releases can play an important role in your institution's front-line recruiting efforts—a function that grows in importance as the pool of potential students shrinks.

Hometown is where the heart is

For building an institution's reputation, a hometown feature will never beat a story on a professor's scientific discovery or the word that *Money* magazine says your campus is one of the nation's best education buys. Nonetheless, more and more PR directors are placing high value on hometown news and feature stories for reaching prospective students, parents of current students, and the general public.

In fact, two-thirds of the PR directors responding to a recent survey said they considered their hometown news programs very important.

Carey Downs Jack, director of public relations at Western New England College in Massachusetts, sent questionnaires to 95 colleagues at colleges and universities in the Northeast. Of the 57 who replied, 38 said hometown news was very important to their operations while only 15 said it had a low priority.

Barbara B. Petura is director of news and information services at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington.

And, Jack notes, 14 of those who said they considered hometowners important added that they expect their hometown programs to improve even more as they increase their word-processing capabilities.

A variety of computer functions—from basic editing to list processing—can make hometowners an easy job. But easy or not, no program is worth your trouble unless it gets results.

Is hometown news worth the effort? Bob Bruce, director of university information at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, has no doubts.

"Hometown news should be bread and butter for college news services," he says. "Hometown stories can build identification and recognition for a school, reinforce recruitment efforts, and help to establish a reputation of service and credibility for the campus press relations unit."

Those reasons spell benefits for the institution. But Bruce adds that the newspapers have their own reasons for liking hometowners. "While the technological revolution may be changing the production practices of many local newspapers, editors still believe in an old adage: Names sell newspapers."

I received a powerful demonstration of that truth several years ago when I visited the editor of a small daily paper in Oregon. The editor said, "Let me show you an example of what we would really like to receive from colleges and universities."

He pulled out a two-page feature story and an 8 by 12 glossy photograph from Michigan State University's hometown news service.

"This is a story about a successful student from our community and how she's following in her mother's footsteps as an artist," he said. "There's no way in the world we *wouldn't* run this story and picture."

Help with homework

Of course, even a good hometown news program could benefit from longer, more frequent, or better-placed coverage. That's where the computer comes in. With good use of your equipment, you can not only make the production of hometowners easier but also improve your results.

In addition to the writing and editing capabilities that help you handle any paperwork, the computer can:

- *Generate better, more personalized stories.* Not all your releases need end up in print as 2-inch notes—or worse, fine-print lists of names.

"The old system of sending a feature story along with a list of names of participating students results in editors tossing the names into the paper's 'On Campus' column," explains Ron Nief, director of public affairs at Middlebury College. "If you send a newspaper a list, you almost force the paper to print the material as a list."

In contrast, he says, a personalized news story about an individual student has a good chance of being printed as an article with its own headline and often a photo.

That's where the computer comes in. Nief's office began working with computer programmers about three years ago to create software that would insert or merge general directory information about a student into a basic or "shell" story about one of Middlebury's special programs. The biographical information, which includes such points as name, class, major, and hometown, comes from a form each student fills out at registration.

Nief's computer story bank includes almost 200 standard stories on student achievements and activities such as making the dean's list, acting in a play, or preparing to study abroad. Two students help Nief update these files as needed to produce more than 2,000 personalized hometowners each year.

- *Process standard stories more efficiently.* Even if your first priority is in-depth features about newsworthy students, you'll probably still have a few regular "list" stories as well—say, the obligatory honor roll and graduation citations.

The computer simplifies these releases, too. Bob Roseth, director of information services at the University of Washington, says a new computer program there produces quarterly hometown honor roll stories and graduation lists keyed to match the circulation areas of each of the state's daily and weekly newspapers.

- *Distribute releases effectively.* The same programs that merge student biographical files into releases can often tell you what newspapers should receive those releases.

Depending on your system, you might list each student's hometown papers right in his or her computerized biographical file. Or your computer might index recipient newspapers by the ZIP codes of their circulation areas. Either way, the computer can then match each student's release to the appropriate newspapers.

To distribute his hometowners most efficiently, Bob Bruce at Nebraska surveyed editors at the state's 200-plus newspapers to find out what towns are in their circulation areas. He compiled the responses into two computer lists. One list, indexed by newspapers, notes which towns each paper covers. The second list, organized by hometown, notes which newspapers have expressed interest in news from that community. With the help of these lists, Bruce's staff mails releases to daily newspapers every afternoon. Packages go to weekly and semiweekly papers once a week.

"This not only helps make distribution more efficient, but, by saving time, it has also enabled us to increase the number of hometown stories we write," Bruce says.

The volume of Nebraska's hometown news makes effective distribution vital. Last summer alone, Bruce's office delivered targeted stories on some 5,000 summer orientation visitors, 3,000 dean's list honorees, 1,500 award winners, and 1,000 graduates.

At Middlebury, Nief's program not only figures out where the releases should go, but it also generates mailing labels. "When we go over to the computer center to pick up the copies of stories, we get the newspaper mailing labels at the same time," he says.

Brown University simplifies mailing even further by printing the address for each newspaper on the release and using window envelopes. And the University of Washington has the capacity to "deliver" hometown stories electronically directly to the newspapers' computers, although "most newspapers have not yet taken advantage of this service," Roseth says.

Home improvements

Now that producing hometowners is so easy, some public relations people have turned their attention to using these releases more effectively. Here are some of the more interesting applications they've found:

- *Parent relations.* Jack at Western New England College sends a copy of each hometown story with a cover letter to the parents of the student involved. The printed letter asks parents to watch for the release and, if possible, to send Jack's office a copy of the clipping along with the name of the paper and the date the story appeared.

"The response to this note is overwhelming," Jack says. "I've heard from proud mothers who marched down to the offices of the local editors to be sure their youngsters' dean's list announcements received proper treatment. I've also received scores of personal notes sharing the good feelings that these announcements create back in the hometown."

Jack adds that she's convinced that the goodwill her system generates "far exceeds the effort involved—to say nothing about eliminating the need for paid clipping services!"

- *High school contacts.* Nief at Middlebury is modifying his office's software to include the name of each student's high school in stories. "We'll send a copy of each news story to the guidance counselor at the high school with a request to give the article to the school newspaper," Nief says.

"Getting a story in the *New York Times* is great," he adds, "but if we're talking about the front line of admissions, hometowners have an extremely important role."

- *Image building.* More and more institutions are tailoring their hometown programs to support institutional marketing and image-building goals. "We select topics that are in concert with our school's missions and objectives—academic honors or students volunteering at social welfare agencies," says Joe McAleer, director of public relations at Springfield College in Massachusetts. "This associates the college's name with actions that bring credit to students, parents, and the college community."

Nief at Middlebury recently added to his repertoire a story on students who are doing a senior thesis as part of their graduation requirement. These stories help build an understanding of the college's strong academic standards, he says.

A particularly good example of applying the hometowner comes from the University of Oregon. Three years ago, the university began a major—and highly successful—campaign to encourage top high school graduates to attend Oregon rather than go out of state. Thanks to word processing, Oregon's hometown program became one of the effort's most effective tools.

First, John Crosiar, assistant director of Oregon's news bureau, used computerized hometowners to draw personal attention to student achievements. "If we had five advertising students win a national competition, for example, it was very easy to prepare five personalized versions of the same story using a word processor," he says.

Word processing also made it possible to send, with each release, a personalized letter to the newspaper's editor. These letters explained the campaign and asked for the editors' help. This contact apparently helped; the papers ran dozens of stories, often with the pictures Crosiar provided.

And, as an extra plus, Crosiar managed to recycle many of the student features. They appeared in the back-to-school edition the university prepared in cooperation with the Eugene daily paper, the *Register-Guard*.

The PR people who use computers to produce hometowners know how easy these once-tedious releases can be. Of course, that knowledge is only the first step; knowing how to use hometown releases well is another. Still, with the time and effort the computer can save you, it's worth your while to consider heading for home.

How to Place Science Stories

by Gary R. Peterson

If you're a public information officer communicating university research, you may find your job easier if you heed advice from top media representatives who cover research and science. They share the following counsel in the CASE handbook, *Communicating University Research.*

1. *Know your worth.* "No matter how many reporters tell you that they never listen to a university 'flack' or that they don't care about news releases, it isn't true," says David Perlman, associate editor and science writer, the *San Francisco Chronicle.* "You are the people we depend on more than any other source."

Only about 50 of the country's 1,750 newspapers have full-time science writers, Perlman continues. "This means your responsibility is even greater because so many newspapers rely almost exclusively on the material you put out."

2. *Know your campus.* "The better you become at functioning as a reporter and covering your own institution, the better you will be as a public information officer," says Allen L. Hammond, editor of *Science 82*. "My own instinct is that a lot of things pushed on you by your institutions to keep you busy are relatively ineffective. You can spend your time better by going out and getting to know people, getting their confidence, and therefore being able to be an effective 'alerter.' "

Robert Bazell, science reporter for NBC News, urges you to avoid being the type of public relations officer who thinks that everything going on is important or that nothing going on is important. "Both are equal sins," he says. "The latter is more common."

To evaluate how newsworthy a research story is, reporters suggest you consider how big an impact it has on people's lives.

3. *Know how to work with researchers.* Some researchers are doing exciting things, but don't know how to communicate through the mass media. Others fear media attention. You must help them overcome these obstacles.

"Try to help us by briefing your scientists when they have a major piece of news to announce, when something has just been published, and when you're bringing them into a press conference," says Perlman. "Tell them what kind of queer ducks they are going to face out there, what they'll have to explain, and why it's necessary to be simple and clear and honest."

Gary R. Peterson is writer and news editor for the Department of Agriculture Information Services at Pennsylvania State University.

Susan West, staff writer for *Science 82*, says you should "convince scientists that your job is not a threat to them. Give them good examples of people who write well about science. Cultivate their trust that way."

4. *Know the market.* "Not everything is interesting to everybody," says Hammond. "If you're trying to get on the 'Today' show, you'd better watch the 'Today' show. If you want to get in *Science 82*, know what we do and then have the judgment to select topics of interest to us." Trying to place material that doesn't suit the medium "doesn't enhance your reputation," he adds.

Media needs differ. For example, Patrick Young, science writer for Newhouse News Service, says his emphasis is to do "something no one else is doing, which tends to cut down on doing news stories." Because the papers he writes for also may carry wire service stories, he probably won't use a release that's been picked up by AP or UPI. "I'm going to do the trend stories, the follow-ups that appear weeks later," he says. He likes stories that stimulate a "gee, that's interesting" response. "I'm looking for that element of 'holy cow, that's unusual.' "

Christine Russell, medical reporter for the *Washington Post*, focuses on the "so-called balance story that lets both sides have their say. Too many times the science-related topics that get covered don't have any bottom line. We're covering things for which we have a lot of questions, and often the scientists or experts we're consulting don't have all the answers."

The message for PR professionals: Tell your researcher that he or she probably won't have "the last word" in an article. Make it clear that the reporter may quote others who disagree with your researcher's conclusions.

For radio and television coverage, remember that reporters "cannot write off your release," says NBC's Bazell. "We have to make an effort to cover your story by getting an actuality on film. If you don't make the story interesting enough to seem worth our time to produce it, we aren't going to bother." The moral: Don't bury the lead in the middle of the release.

At AP Radio, Edward J. DeFontaine, managing editor, says he wants hard news. And he wants to be able to talk with scientists involved in a breaking story. A tip: DeFontaine says AP Radio does five agriculture shows a day and is "actively seeking anything about innovation in agriculture."

Knowing the market means being selective. "If reporters got fewer releases on more important topics, we'd all be a lot happier," Russell adds.

5. *Direct traffic.* "Most of the time I'm trying to write about people doing things in the laboratory in connection with a particular problem," says Perlman. "This is where people like myself depend on people like you. Help us find our way through the vast academic structure to talk to the people at the forefront of research."

You can make or break your repuation with the media depending on how you handle the big story. When the major media are clamoring for information, the access you provide to scientists is important.

You job is like flying a 747, says Bazell. "Most of the time the automatic pilot is on and it's really a boring job. But when that tiny airplane starts to come at you, you've got to know what to do. You have to deal with the pressure and orchestrate things so that most of the media get what they want."

6. *Help reporters evaluate.* When you're issuing a news release, "Call us and let us know whether it's a real story or a nonstory," says Russell. Perlman agrees: "If you have a chance to sort out some of the phonies at your institution, in some way communicate your inside knowledge to us without ever saying enough to get you fired." Honesty will boost your credibility with reporters.

7. *Vary your approach.* Knowing whether to make a phone call, send a news release, or write a letter is a matter of judgment and knowing the media. A news release is not always the best vehicle. At *Science 82*, for example, a news release has about "a one-thousandth chance of getting into the magazine," Hammond says. "About 40 percent of our articles arise from ideas that come in through query letters. . . . Write us a letter. Tell us what's important and why, some of the antecedents, and who the people are." In his view a query letter is better than a news release because "it shows that somebody thought about this magazine and decided this story was right for us."

William Stockton, science editor of the *New York Times*, prefers a one-page letter with background material attached. He promises you'll get a reply. If you have hot news about a breaking story, pick up the telephone.

AP Radio's DeFontaine also wants to be called with breaking news. And he likes to know which experts at institutions "can explain a development in lay terms, but from a scientific point of view." He and other media representatives say they like lists of experts that tell which topics the scientists can speak about. A caveat: Make sure the sources you list are ready to cooperate and understand that they may be called at any time.

If you send videotapes to networks and expect them to get used, you're wasting your money, Bazell adds. "The quality is never high enough that I could broadcast them on the air. What we need from you are words to tell us what a good story this is, not prepackaged pictures."

However, you could send a videotape, he adds, to show how articulate and quotable a certain scientist is and the type of information he or she can give.

8. *Look for the human angle.* "We tend to forget that a scientist is a human being," says *Baltimore Sun* Science Writer Jon Franklin. Discuss the research as a creative process. Before making a research breakthrough, the scientist "had a set of background facts and circumstances and actively did something with them," Franklin says. "The scientist put together an apparatus, poured things into it, watched it bubble and froth and foam. . . . Let the reader follow what the scientist did as a human being, not as an abstract entity. This allows your reader to draw his or her own conclusions."

Franklin, who won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting, likes to focus on three or four highlights of a discovery in his articles. As he explains those highlights, the reader learns what he or she needs to know. You can do the same in writing news releases or query letters.

The bottom line in communicating university research—as in all advancement entities—is talent, says Young. "Does the information officer know what is going on at the institution? Does he or she have good judgment about what is news, what is valuable, and what is important? Is the information officer willing to be cooperative and helpful? A lot of it is mutual respect, and frankly, sometimes personality just comes into play."

You can find even more how-to advice in Communicating University Research, *a 137-page handbook with more than 18 articles by media professionals, researchers, and public information officers. It's available for $18.50 (including shipping) from the CASE Publications Order Department, 80 S. Early St., Alexandria, VA 22304.*

Scientific Methods

Basic tips on writing periodical articles about research

by Mary Ruth Yoe

My second-grade teacher overreacted to Sputnik. After the Russians beat us into space, a call echoed down the educational ladder: Where are the scientists of tomorrow? When the word reached Prince Frederick Elementary School, Mrs. Elliott explained to us that science was a very difficult subject, but if we didn't learn it, the Russians would take over the world.

I heard this Cold War logic through a second-grader's mind: Science was scary. Science was too hard.

The years passed. After high school biology, I managed to avoid science completely until I found myself working on the magazine of a major research university, where even campus graffiti have scientific punch lines.

I had to learn about science—and about science writing. And, after five years of trial and error, I've picked up a few good ideas.

Research questions

The first hurdle—and sometimes the most daunting—is learning to work with scientists.

It's important not to walk into any interview cold. This is especially true with science articles: You have to do your homework. It's also important to let the scientist *know* that you plan to prepare. When you call to set up the interview, ask for appropriate background material.

If the scientist says, "Don't worry, it will be easier to explain it to you in person," don't take that too seriously. Find some related articles in the popular scientific press (try such periodicals as *Science News, New Scientist,* and *Science 86*). Look up the subject in a textbook or even an encyclopedia. At least you'll have an overview of the field and be familiar with terms. Remember, you aren't trying to become an expert—just somebody who can understand an expert.

From your background reading, prepare a list of questions. Stay away from such umbrella queries as, "Just what is it that you do?" Even delivered with your best cocktail party smile, that type of question will elicit a bored, superficial answer.

Sometimes the researcher will begin on the kindergarten level. If you get something along the lines of "There are these big, bad cells that eat up the alien invaders," you can up the intellectual ante by saying brightly, "Oh, are those the macrophages?" This gambit usually wins you a professorial smile of approval. There's a danger that the level of conversation may then rise too quickly, but you can always pull it back. And you will have convinced the scientist you can handle the material.

Once the interview is under way, keep it going with follow-up questions. These let you be sure you understand the material. A good trick is to rephrase what the scientist has just covered: "So what you're really saying is that . . . "

These questions also ensure that the scientist presents the material as clearly as possible. If an example or an analogy occurs to you during the conversation, try it out. Ask for additional examples. And if a point goes over your head, admit it. Ask the scientist to try again.

Save any controversial questions for the late-middle of the interview. By then, you will have established rapport, and the scientist will be more willing to field difficult questions—especially if you ask politely. Keep in mind that this is not the time to emulate "Sixty Minutes."

Mary Ruth Yoe is a free-lance writer and editor in Brandon, Vermont. Formerly, Yoe was editor of the Alumni Magazine Consortium, at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland.

Interpreting the data

The rules for writing the science article are, of course, the same as those for good writing of any sort.

Before you begin, decide what major points you'll be making. Sometimes, especially when a subject is new to you, you can lose track of the article's focus in the midst of all the procedural data. If you jump in with details of experiments (the 50-letter name of a trial drug, the number of rats in a control group) before suggesting the drift of the research (a drug that may help arthritis sufferers, a better artificial knee), you're likely to lose readers. They won't wade through the terminology to reach the point.

Once you have the destination of the article firmly in mind, aim the rest of your writing to give the reader as comfortable a ride as possible—without being condescending. Help the reader draw inferences from the material by signaling important discoveries and possible stumbling blocks. For example:

- Use clear transitions—words such as *now, so, but*—to follow the researcher's logic.
- Anticipate possible questions and ask them for the reader: Why dopamine? Was X really true?
- Work definitions in unobtrusively—in a parenthetical or appositive phrase. (Receptors are sites where neurotransmitters, the chemical messengers of the nervous system, act.)
- Use examples or analogies, perhaps the ones you tried out on the researcher during your interview. After all, if comparisons helped you understand the material, they'll probably help the reader. One writer described a super-coiled link of DNA this way: "Imagine it's had a perm at the hairdresser's and gone kinky."
- Don't become a mimic. Take care not to learn the subject so well that you use its jargon instead of English. I can hear you say, "Don't worry, I'll never be able to do that," but it's a sin that the novice or near-novice is likely to commit. You pick up the lingo—Germanic gaggles of nouns in search of an active verb—and you want to use it. Do so only sparingly.

Sometimes, especially in longer articles that cover many points, you can find yourself taking a detour. Before you know it, you're wandering down the primrose path of the researcher's particular whim—only to lose your theme and your reader.

The information may be an interesting sidelight to the topic, but if it doesn't work directly with the main point, or if it's a fascinating technicality that will go over the average reader's head, turn it into an honest sidebar. This both satisfies the researcher and lets the reader know from the start that the material is an aside.

Drawing conclusions

When you leave an interview, you may feel on top of the subject, sure of its ins and outs. But when you sit down to write, you may discover holes in your thinking. You can't explain what you don't understand. How can you salvage the situation?

First, try to avoid it all together. Take good notes and use a tape recorder, too. Try to transcribe your notes within an hour—certainly within 24 hours—after the interview.

But if the worst happens, there are ways to fill in the blanks. First, make a list of the information you need. Try to get the article as finished as you can by writing around the holes; the attempt at writing will show you what you're missing. Then call. The researcher will almost always respond even more helpfully than at the original interview—because he or she will be impressed by your diligence.

Of course, there's the rare scientist who really isn't a nice person. These people grant interviews reluctantly, demand to see the final product, and seemingly begrudge the short time they give you.

How do you call someone like this for help? You may not have to. Instead, call a junior member of the department with your questions. Explain that you don't want to bother Dr. So-and-so, who is going to get a final reading anyway. The junior staffer will understand (probably only too well) and will help you fill in the holes.

Verifying results

Often, the touchiest part of writing a science article is negotiating who gets the final say on the finished piece. Researchers who have been burned by superficial or overly optimistic media coverage often develop a general mistrust of the press and insist upon approving all articles.

Traditionally, the journalist's reaction has been to push back his or her fedora and growl, "It's my business to get the facts straight. My reputation's on the line, too, and you'll just have to trust me to do my job."

On the other hand, as science grows more and more complex, many writers appreciate a proofreading. The important thing to remember is that the scientist knows science and the writer knows writing. To prevent researchers from rewriting your work in the language they're used to—that of the scientific abstract—practice a few helpful techniques.

One ploy is to give the scientist limited time for reading. Make an appointment and deliver a copy—neatly typed to your publication's line count and looking as finished as possible—to his or her desk. Then come back within the hour to retrieve it.

Or, stand over the scientist as he or she reads. "To save you time," you can say craftily, "I've marked the parts that pertain directly to your work."

Another method is to read the article, or perhaps just the direct quotes, over the phone. The scientist will concentrate on making sure the facts and the general sense of the article are correct and refrain from making editorial embellishments.

Learning by experiment

Along the way, as you write more and more articles and develop working relationships with the researchers you cover, you will build up a reference library of your own: people you can trust to give you accurate, unbiased background.

One final bit of advice: The best way to get started is to start small—say, with a news item rather than a lengthy, complex feature—and build. With each effort, you'll learn more about science, and the writing will get easier.

And, eventually, you may even understand that graffiti.

Breaking Free from Releases

You want to run an article on the microbiology department's latest breakthrough, and the public relations office helpfully sends over a lengthy release. Does this mean most of your work is done?

Although you may be tempted simply to reprint a press release—or to revise it only slightly—don't. The press release is meant to provide a framework for reporters, not the finished story. Like any other reporter, you must work from the press release to get the article that the readers of your periodical deserve.

What makes a press release different from a feature or news article? To begin with, it provides the official, institutional view of a subject. In fact, its real point is not so much that something newsworthy has happened but rather that something newsworthy has happened at Siwash.

This distinction creates a few points of difference:

- *Names and titles.* A release usually lists the full name and title (or titles) for every researcher involved. In an article, where the emphasis is on the science and not on the institution, you need only the most relevant names and titles. For example, you can let the reader assume that the head of the new emergency medicine program has an M.D. And you don't have to list each and every investigator; the phrase "a team of 11 others" may cover the minor contributors nicely. Another useful variation: "Wagner, Kuhar, and colleagues."
- *Quotations.* Avoid lifting researchers' comments directly from the press release. Sure, the quotes have been passed by everyone and the information is correct, but they're almost guaranteed to be lifeless. When researchers or administrators get the chance to edit their remarks, they almost always rewrite them, turning spoken English into polished writing. And press releases often end up with quotations by committee: accurate but dry.
- *Organization.* A good press release will lead with the breaking news. But if you're writing a long feature, you'll want to establish a context for that news first—perhaps by writing your lead from the background material that got shoved to the end of the press release. Since you don't need to present immediately the who, what, when, and where of the press release, you can focus more on the why. —MRY

Section 5

Broadcast Your Message

Working with Television News

by Paul D. Lowenberg

It is a cliche to say that television news has replaced the newspaper as a major source of news and information for the American public. Nevertheless, the statement is true.

And, if your public information office is to do a truly effective job, it must find ways to use the electronic media to reach its audience.

When an information office decides to use television, it then faces two options. It can either produce its own films or videotapes and hope the quality is good enough that they will be used by television. Or it can develop its relations with television news departments to such a degree that they will come to the campus to do their own filming.

At the University of California, Davis, we opt for the latter choice. The reason is a simple one—economy.

Getting into the business of producing films or videotapes, whether by contracting through an outside agency or by using campus production facilities, can be prohibitively expensive, as well as time consuming.

Encouraging television news departments to come to the campus to film their own stories not only costs practically nothing, but it also gives a virtual promise that the film will be used on the air.

The first goal of the information office should be to evaluate the role television can play in its overall information program. The information officer might begin by taking a hard, objective look at the television resources available in his or her area. How many stations are there? How close to the campus are they? What is the quality of their news programming?

The information officer may also consider whether the intended audience is highly specific (engineering students, prospective medical students, other educators, for example) or the public at large, which is being asked to support the institution by encouraging its children to attend, making contributions, and/or voting money for continued development.

Television news is best for conveying general information to a nonspecific audience. The appointment of a new dean, for instance, may be very important for the future direction of the college, and of great interest to other educators or prospective students, but it generally does not make for a good television news story.

On the other hand, an unusual piece of research or a new way of teaching would likely have a wider appeal and might make an excellent story for the early news.

As an information officer, it is your job to see that TV news is encouraged to cover those stories that lend themselves well to the medium, and not just the stories that are self-serving to your campus's interests.

In short, you must acquaint yourself with the peculiar needs of television news and then fill those needs as best and as often as you can.

Effective relations with TV news

Once you have decided it is worthwhile to take measures to improve your working relationships with local television news operations, how might you do it?

Here are three suggestions:

1. *Develop good personal relationships with TV newsroom personnel.* Get to know not just the reporters but the assignment editors, producers, and news directors in your area. Pay visits to the stations, and try to watch a newscast being put together if you've never done so. Try to talk to the assignment editor or news director away from the office, where he or she will have the opportunity to listen to you without constant interruption.

2. *Learn to become a trusted news resource for the TV media.* You probably have a lot of competition for news in your area, but once you have built up the assignment editor's confidence in you, he or she may turn to you for an expert in a particular field or a story idea on a slow day. Try to take an objective look at your college and its function for legitimate news stories that would interest TV news. Don't oversell stories. If you've got a major news story, by all means say so. But if the story is of the light feature variety, let the assignment editor know that, too. Once they find they can trust your TV news judgment, assignment editors will turn to you more and more often for help.

3. *Try preparing special press releases for use by television.* At UC-Davis we send out what we call the "Gold Sheet"—a sheet of gold paper on which we list a story in headline form: the date, time, location, and visual possibilities. We also have a section for "comments" where we give more background about the story. Assignment editors in our area have responded very positively to this because they can get most of the information they need at a glance. We use the gold sheet in place of a traditional press release or to "flag" a press release with information about when and where the subject might be interviewed and what visual possibilities may exist.

Dealing with TV news day-to-day

Once you have successfully persuaded your local television news operations that there are worthwhile stories to cover on your campus, you must be prepared to cope with the special needs of this medium.

Here are some practical suggestions we have found helpful at UC-Davis:

- *Think visuals.* Television is a visual medium. It relies heavily on being able to see something happening. Think about the visual possibilities inherent in every story and let the television newsperson know what they are in advance. Try to avoid "talking heads," straight interviews with no visual accompaniment. TV news hates them and usually tries to avoid them at all costs.
- *Time.* Time is very important for television news crews. Try not to waste it. Covering a story generally takes a

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fair amount of time, perhaps an hour or so. Your subject should know this in advance and be prepared to spend time with the reporter. You can help move things along by knowing what the visual possibilities are and having them ready to go before the TV crew arrives.

- *Scheduling*. Your main television news target should be the early evening news broadcast. This is when the viewing audience is highest. This means that, whenever possible, you should schedule television news coverage between about 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. This gives the reporter and crew enough time to properly script the story. You want to be sure you give the TV newspeople every opportunity to do a good job of putting the story together.

It also helps to be aware of competing news events when you schedule your story. If at all possible, try to schedule your event when the competition would be the least. A call to local assignment editors will help you learn which are the traditional "slow" news days. These are the days when your story may stand a better chance of being covered, and may get longer play on the air.

- *Avoid the traditional press conference.* There is nothing so deadly as the traditional press conference format—four people sitting around a table discussing some piece of research or change in campus policy. Try to add some visual elements to this format if there is no other alternative. Pick out the most articulate member of the group and ask him or her to be the one to do the individual interviews with TV reporters after the conference.

- *Prepare background information.* Have some written background information available to the TV reporter on arrival. Frequently reporters are sent off to cover a story without being told what it's about. Having a few paragraphs available for the reporter he or she arrives can save a lot of unnecessary questions and time.

- *Technical arrangements.* Television news means lights, cameras, and sound equipment. Be aware of technical details as you set up your story. Know where the power outlets are, whether there will be enough light to shoot, and enough room for a two- or three-person TV crew or crews to set up and maneuver. Don't forget about convenient parking arrangements so the camera operator doesn't have to lug gear long distances through a downpour or searing heat to cover the story.

- *Subject preparation.* Give the faculty member or administrator who is the subject of your story some idea of what to expect when the TV reporter arrives. You don't have to tell him or her exactly what to say and do. But do explain approximately how much time will be involved, what the reporter might want to see demonstrated, and what questions are likely to be asked. Advise the subject to give concise answers in common terms.

If the subject is going to perform an experiment or demonstration, can the outcome be guaranteed in advance? Are there other visual possibilities available to accompany the story, and where are they located? Try to answer these questions before the TV crew arrives.

- *Story file.* Keep story ideas handy. TV crews may frequently ask, "What else is going on here that we could film?" It's a good idea to have one or two other story possibilities in mind. At Davis, we keep a story file of timeless visual feature ideas for those "slow news days" when we get calls from assignment editors looking for something to film.

Working with television news often requires a great deal of energy, effort, and creativity. But the payoff can be exposure for your institution to potential audiences in the hundreds of thousands.

Writing Broadcast News

by Harry Durham

Television newscasters tell us about the major events of the day. They look directly at us and speak forcefully, clearly, with no "uhs," no hesitation. Because we see and hear television and radio news presented in this fashion, we have a tendency to denigrate television and radio news writing. We somehow assume that a news story on the broadcast media will sound all right if you can just get one of those smooth talking faces and great sounding voices to tell people about it. Contrary to appearances, practically every word the reporter speaks on television or radio newscasts is *written* in the script. For TV, he or she reads the script from a device that allows the broadcaster to look directly into the lens of the camera and see the words reflected in a two-way mirror. Thus, good writing is essential to broadcast news.

Broadcast news writing differs considerably from print news writing. Radio and television news is written to be heard. And because the audience listens to the broadcast news story, we're much more informal with broadcast writing than with writing for print. Sometimes we give the audience warnings that something important is about to be said. In print, a story would have big headlines giving the main idea, but in broadcasting, we've used the headline or attention-getter to say, "Get ready, here comes the news." You've seen the special news announcements on television which say, "Here is John Chancelor with an NBC News Hotline Report." That tells us to get ready, something important is about to be presented.

The different ways the two media handle a major news story indicate something about their basic characteristics. Print media are spatial, occupying physical space. You can pass a print story around from one person to another, and we even speak of newspaper coverage of a story in terms of column inches. Broadcast media are temporal, occupying time. You cannot physically hold in your hands a broadcast story. You may hold the video or audio tape that contains a story, but in order to experience the story, you have to have a machine that replays

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the video or audio tape in its original time sequence. We speak of broadcast stories in terms of time—as, the story ran 60 seconds or two minutes.

Print media are perfectly paced to the individual receiver: Whether you are a fast or slow reader makes no difference so far as your ability to receive and understand a story. If you have difficulty with a phrase, you can always go back and reread it. On the other hand, broadcast media are paced for group reception. Because there is no opportunity for recall, in broadcast writing we sometimes repeat key thoughts or information that the listener should know. For example, in a story about President Reagan, he will probably be referred to one time as President Reagan, another time as Mr. Reagan, and perhaps a third time as the President. There will be very little use of a personal pronoun because it's easy to confuse the person to whom the pronoun relates.

Just as there are differences between print and broadcast writing, there are differences in radio and television writing. The major difference is that radio cannot relate to any visuals. For example, in a radio story we might say, "The middle-aged woman said she didn't believe the Tooth Fairy could have stolen her geraniums." TV wouldn't have to tell you she's middle-aged, or even that she's a woman. In radio writing, we spend much more time orienting our audience than we do in TV.

At the beginning and end of every actuality (a newsmaker's actual voice), the newscaster will identify the speaker. For example, "In California today, Jimmy Carter said people must renew their commitment to government. CARTER QUOTE—'The American people . . . to have better government at all levels.' Jimmy Carter speaking in California."

Radio news stories are usually very short. Typical network news stories will average less than 30 seconds each.

Usually in radio news writing we do not ask the newscaster to read direct quotes. It's time consuming and awkward. For example, "Quote—I didn't mean to hit her—end quote, the defendant said." A radio story would normally read, "The defendant said he didn't mean to hit the woman." Statements from others that are not actualities are almost always paraphrased for radio reporting. Also, when reporting things people say, radio news writers use little phrases to get you ready to listen to the paraphrased quote. For example, "The President takes a blast at his opponent. Today in California, the President said the Democratic candidate was deliberately misquoting some of his earlier statements about nuclear disarmament."

Radio, like television, is very timely with its news reporting. Since there are more radio newscasts per day than there are television newscasts, radio is the more timely of the two media. Radio newspersons like to use phrases such as " . . . earlier this morning," " . . . just an hour ago," " . . . right at this very minute," for example. For years, radio has been touting itself as *the* news medium. Quoted in *Broadcasting* magazine, NBC Radio Division President Jack Thayer said there is a new prominence for radio news concurrent with the development of "our instant society." "Radio has become the 'now medium,' " he wrote, "leaving news dissection to television and print." He added, "Turning on the news reinforces the fact that the world is OK or at least that it is still there." Today, good radio writing takes advantage of the fact that there is a news program scheduled every hour, half hour, or even every 15 minutes.

The trend of audiences to turn to radio for their news has led to the development of all-news stations in some of the nation's larger cities. These stations broadcast only news and news features throughout their broadcast day. Usually the information the all-news stations presents is updated at least every hour, sometimes more often.

The basic difference between television and radio writing is that in television you must be concerned with the visual. That may sound a bit ridiculous because everyone assumes it's obvious, but it isn't. While many fine print writers think the most important part of any news story is the *word*, the most important part of any television presentation is the *visual*. Acceptance of this precept leads to the old "if it doesn't wiggle, it ain't TV" style of local newscasts. As a result, TV newscasters spent their time running after anything that "wiggled," namely: ambulances, fire trucks, police cars, and so on. They shied away from in-depth stories on local government, education, and other issues, because these stories had no visuals.

Fortunately, in the past 10 to 15 years we've seen much maturing of local television news operations throughout the country. Today, responsible broadcasters in every TV market tackle some really tough issues, even though many of them simply cannot be visualized effectively. Issues such as a new redistricting plan for state government, a judicial reform bill, or a school bond referendum today are handled fairly and clearly.

Covering issues like these for TV usually means that we see on the screen a newscaster and some kind of artwork or symbol on the screen relating to the topic being covered. The newscaster then may have short film clips from spokespersons on either side of an issue.

However, even in this style of reporting, words may relate to the visual. If there is a conflict between the visual and aural presentation, the visual will win, but your audience may be confused. Here's an example presented in TV writing format:

Video	*Audio*
FILM: Scoop Jackson and Jimmy Carter patting each other on the backs and carrying on very congenial conversation.	NEWSMAN: Scoop Jackson said he was shocked by Carter's tasteless use of such racist talk as the ethnic purity phrase.

Something's wrong here. The audience isn't sure what it is. Either this film was taken before Scoop Jackson was upset, or it was taken after, and now he and Jimmy Carter have made up. We can use the same film for the same story, *if* we relate our words to the visual first.

Video	*Audio*
Same film as before	NEWSMAN: While they were the best of friends yesterday at the Democratic fund raising breakfast . . . today the smiles faded as Jackson said he was shocked by Carter's. . . .

Now the audience knows what they're looking at. They understand how this scene relates to the words they're hearing.

All good broadcast writing is basically conversational writing. Broadcast news writers often imagine they're telling someone about the event or personality on which they're reporting. They use words that are normally used in conversation. Newspaper writers often find some other unusual words that fit a particular space very well. One such word is "solon," which is often used in headlines or print stories to describe state legislators. Obviously, "solons" takes up much less space than "state legislators" so the newspaper writer uses the word often. "Solons" is a perfectly legitimate word which means learned body of elected officials, but it is not part of our spoken vocabulary, and therefore broadcasters do not use it.

To summarize, the main points of good broadcast news writing are:

1. *Be brief but clear.* Full details are available, but on another program or in another medium.
2. *Keep the audiences oriented.* This rule applies particularly to radio.
3. *Make your story timely.* Arrange your information so the newscaster can say, "today," "yesterday," "this evening," etc.
4. *In television writing, always relate to the visual.*
5. *Use conversational English.* If you must use an unfamiliar word, explain it to your audience.

Following these simple suggestions may not make you a great broadcast writer, but your message *will* be understood by the millions who watch and listen to broadcast news.

Guidelines for Visiting TV News Directors

by Arthur V. Ciervo

You can apply most of the information presented in "Guidelines for Visiting Editors" (page 61) to television news directors. Keep these additional facts in mind:

- *Tailor your information for TV.* Television is the people's choice as the medium to receive news and information. TV presents information to the widest possible audience for the four to six hours the average set is on each day. To get your message to this mass audience, present facts in a manner that will be interesting and understandable to casual viewers.

Quantity of information does not make a point; drama and emotion do. Think visually. Be certain you have a person the reporter can interview or something on which the camera can focus. Present your case so the viewer is involved and cares about what happens.

- *Be aware of broadcast schedules.* TV newsrooms are extremely busy in the early morning, when news directors are making assignments, and in the late afternoon, when they are preparing the early evening news. Make your calls—by phone or in person—in the middle of the day. And keep them short.

When you approach a news director for coverage, make certain that the information you present will be of interest to people in the wide geographic areas of the station's audience. Do research to see which counties and cities are included in the station's broadcast area.

Arthur V. Ciervo is president of Arthur Ciervo & Associates in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

So You Want to Be in Pictures?

A video pro tells how your institution can break into the television business

by Raymond M. Cubberley

Television is much more than radio with pictures. When you blend moving pictures and sound with a compelling script, you get emotion. And emotion makes things happen.

Robert Ringel, dean of Purdue University's School of Humanities, Social Science, and Education, couldn't agree more. He discovered the power of television when he helped launch a new video recruiting program designed to spotlight his school.

"A public that once considered Purdue University to be an engineering school has only now begun to realize that it offers a healthy, creative liberal arts program as well," he says. As proof, he happily points to a 16 percent rise in HSSE admissions—this at a time when enrollments in the nation's liberal arts programs are declining.

For recruiting students, raising funds, and generating better public relations, more and more institutions like Purdue are turning to television. TV's emotional component gives video that extra impact that can improve your institutional advancement efforts.

Another success story comes from Roberts Wesleyan College, which used an outside public relations firm to produce six 30-second commercial image-and-awareness spots. Aimed at local community leaders, the spots aired on news and public affairs programs. Each spot featured a person or group of people, such as the college president, a student, a faculty member, or an alumnus. A narrator explained how these people exemplify "the sense of values" at Roberts Wesleyan. George Ford, vice president for development, says that the result has been increased local awareness of Roberts Wesleyan.

"We needed a tool to enhance our image," he says, "and this campaign has done just that. Video has a sparkle to it that other media don't have. TV has more pizzazz and more attention-getting power.

"Sure, video is expensive, but nowhere else can you get the star quality quicker and with a greater degree of effectiveness."

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Enrollment matters not

The success of Roberts Wesleyan, a private college with 612 students, shows that you don't have to be a large state university to get involved with TV. Another small institution taking advantage of this medium is Westark Community College in Arkansas.

Westark uses locally produced TV commercials to help increase enrollment. Director of Public Information Sondra LaMar admits that she knew little about video before coming to Westark. But by reading all she could on the subject and seeking outside expertise from a local television free-lancer, she was able to put together a successful student registration campaign for television that tied in with campaigns in radio and print.

"We feel the television spots have helped make the community aware of Westark," says LaMar. "We survey the students when they register, and a great many of them say they first heard about the school on television.

"I feel we're getting maximum mileage out of the video, since after we use the spots for commercials, local stations air them further as public service announcements. This is because of the rapport we've established with local broadcasters. They give us some free air time after we've paid for the first few commercial spots."

If you're afraid to take the financial plunge into video, follow the example of Westark and Roberts Wesleyan. Dip your toes in by working with an outside expert. Try a free-lancer, a video specialist in a PR firm, or one of your contacts at a local TV station.

Thinking things through

Before banging on doors, however, compile some necessary information:

1. *Decide what you want to do in video.* Do you want commercials, PSAs, or longer, special programs aimed at your various publics?
2. *If you are considering the longer program, make a list of possible interview subjects and specific things you want them to talk about on camera.* Don't forget to include students when appropriate.
3. *Compile a list of possible visuals for your program message.* But remember that if your message requires showing students playing soccer on a green and flowering campus, you must tape during the spring.
4. *Draft a script for the proposed program.* Keep in mind that if you want a commercial or PSA, you must keep it short—generally 30 seconds. When you write it, make sure the words and ideas complement the visuals you listed earlier. One way to show the connection is by creating a storyboard. This consists of a drawing of each scene with the accompanying audio script.

With this information in hand, you're ready to approach the local TV expert you've selected. Be sure to check this person's previous work so you know whether he or she is capable of the professional quality you're looking for. Ask this expert to look at your script and direct you to production people who'll bring your ideas to life on videotape.

The cost of production services varies widely. Generally, companies located in large cities are more expensive, partly because of the sophistication of their equipment. But if it's flash and special effects you want, they're the people to do it.

On the other hand, if you want an inexpensive, simple message, contact the production director at your local TV station. You may be able to reduce costs further by doing some of the work on campus.

For example, Westark uses videotape editing equipment on campus but has the audio produced professionally off-campus. LaMar says Westark produces three 30-second spots a year for less than $1,000, with about half of that cost going to pay for professional audio production.

If you're only interested in producing an occasional TV spot or informational piece, an outside expert is the way to go. But if you want to distribute news features regularly, as many large, state-supported institutions do, then you should consider putting a video expert on staff.

Getting into the business

Purdue University, like many state institutions, moved into video production when TV stations changed from film to videotape in the mid-1970s. The university news service and the agricultural communication service were forced to adopt the new technology to ensure that TV stations could use Purdue-produced news and feature stories. Those stories are still a major part of what's produced here at Purdue and at similar large universities.

Most of the University of Missouri News Services' productions are regular news features that go primarily to small TV stations around the state. Angela Durante, former director of news services, says five or six stories go into a tape that's sent out every six weeks.

"We find that video gives us—particularly since we're in a remote part of the state—a chance to be seen, even in the major markets of St. Louis and Kansas City," she says. "These news spots gain visibility for the good thinking, good research, and some of the spot news that happens here." Many institutions are finding these video news features valuable for publicizing research and other important campus events. To convince news directors to put these video packages on the air, you need to:

- *Make sure your features are of high production quality.* Your tapes must be comparable to the TV station's own work.
- *Build in flexibility.* At Purdue we record the narration on a sound track separate from the natural sound and the interview sound bites. This allows the station to use the story as is or to re-record the narration with one of its own reporters. Also, we include information for graphics (the identity of the person on camera, for example) only in the script, not on the tape, so the station can match the graphics with the rest of its newscast.
- *Remember that news features must have a legitimate news or feature angle.* Oregon State University Broadcast Producer Keith Riggs says he's succeeded in getting stations to use his news features "because we package them so they aren't public relations flackery. They are just like any other news story, except that they mention Oregon State University."
- *Keep these news features to the length stations are used to.* This is usually around 90 seconds. However, this can vary in different parts of the country. For example, Oregon State sends out video packages between 2 and 2½ minutes long. Purdue, on the other hand, keeps its news features to 90 seconds. It's best to simply ask each news director for the preferred length.

An out-of-state state of mind

While TV stations around your state are the most logical targets for these news features, don't limit yourself to them. Send your packages to stations in surrounding states or even to the Cable News Network, as Purdue does. Oregon State sends its work to the network news feeds for ABC, CBS, and NBC. The University of Miami markets its packages to some 50 stations, mostly in the Southeast.

Producing news features regularly means, of course, that your institution must acquire the necessary camera and editing equipment. Admittedly, professional equipment is expensive—a satisfactory camera costs a minimum of $10,000. But institutions that use such equipment have found that the PR benefits more than outweigh the capital investment. After the initial outlay, costs for maintenance, videotape, and postage are relatively minor.

Look before you buy

Save yourself the trauma of requesting a budget-buster by first checking to see if any other departments (such as the communication or AV department) already have acceptable video equipment. "Acceptable" means broadcast-quality equipment, not equipment designed for home use. If you're unsure about the calibre of the campus equipment, send a sample tape to the news director at a local TV station and ask for an opinion.

You must also be aware of the format—that is, the width of the tape. Formats that you're most likely to run across are ¾-inch (also called Umatic) and ½-inch (called either Beta or VHS). Most TV news departments use the Umatic format. So you'll need to either shoot and edit in Umatic or shoot in ½-inch and transfer to Umatic during or after the editing process. Be aware that the quality of the picture will suffer in the transfer.

Even if you can't locate the necessary equipment on campus, you may find other departments willing to share your costs. For example, athletic officials may want to tape games, or someone in the AV department may want to tape lectures. Purdue acquired its first broadcast-quality camera in just this way—by pooling resources.

But keep in mind that as demand for the community equipment grows, you may have trouble getting it when you need it. That's exactly what happened to us. To solve the problem, we recently bought our own broadcast-quality camera and editing equipment for the University News Service.

When you decide to buy video equipment, first look into what's available and what it costs. Start at your local TV stations. Ask the chief engineer or chief photographer to recommend camera makes and models. Then contact the vendors and arrange demonstrations. A vendor will usually allow you to keep the camera (and editing equipment, if need be) for a few days at no charge. This way you can check the performance under varying shooting conditions.

Earlier, I indicated that prices begin around $10,000. The better cameras are in the $20,000 to $30,000 range. Industrial-grade Umatic editing equipment runs around $10,000. You will also need a tripod, light kit, microphone, batteries, and tapes. These will run another $2,000 or so.

The sky's the limit

Of course, once you have videotaping equipment, there are many uses for it other than just commercials, PSAs, and news features. For example:

- *Public relations.* At Purdue, we produce 30- and 60-second spots to air during network telecasts of regional and national football games. We also produce numerous five-minute programs that are shown throughout Indiana during halftime of televised basketball games.

"These are an excellent opportunity

for us to reach a Purdue-oriented audience with information about our service and research efforts," says Joe Bennett, director of university relations.

Other universities, such as Oregon State and Missouri, are also producing their promotional spots for regional and national sports telecasts. Oregon State went to an off-campus production house for the final work so that it could include special effects. Producer Keith Riggs says that while this is expensive, it's cost-effective "These messages need to have that extra professional polish, since they are in competition with network spots for the viewers' attention."

Another type of video gaining popularity at institutions aims at handling a specific PR task. For example, Purdue produced a five-minute program that plays continuously at the Indiana State Fair. We've also produced a half-hour program that explains Purdue's cooperative research arrangement with six manufacturing companies, a program for alumni that describes a new master plan for the main campus, and a presentation that explains university budget needs to our state legislators.

- *Student recruitment.* As competition for high school students heats up, many institutions are using more of their video production time on recruitment pieces. At Purdue, we've produced several with a university-wide approach plus two others that spotlight two of our schools. Other programs are in the works.

The University of Miami has produced two recruiting tapes, one aimed at potential students in general and one for honor students. Susan Bonnett, Miami's director of public affairs, says the university tries to increase the tape's impact by sending a student or faculty "star" from the tape to events where the tape is shown.

"These programs have impressed the people who've seen them," Bonnett says. "We made it a very candid type of production and paid for special effects from off-campus. We also used original music composed by music students."

Recruitment tapes seem to be more effective than the slide shows institutions have traditionally used. "Videotape is ideal for explaining," says Robert Van Neste, the University of Nebraska's assistant director for university information. "Videotape has a realism that slides just can't match."

- *Fund raising.* Thanks to video programs at Roberts Wesleyan, Vice President for Development George Ford says funds are pouring in. "Video has brought in the three F's: friends, funds, and freshmen," he says. The college's two fund-raising programs present the case for its capital campaign and specifically ask for donations. The tapes were made on campus with equipment ordinarily used for such tasks as taping lectures.

The University of Miami produces fund-raising tapes that focus heavily on research. "These have had the strongest impact of anything we've done," says Bonnett. "They have helped to build our department's credibility."

And the list goes on

Other universities are demonstrating video's endless uses:

- The University of Missouri produced a 9-minute information piece for freshman state legislators. Angela Durante says this program showed that the university does more with state dollars than the legislators might think. "We show them the ripple effect of education dollars—that they keep on giving," she explains. "For example, agriculture research aids the State Department of Agriculture."

Missouri also produced a special commencement program that included an overview of the previous year and shots of all the graduates. In addition, the university creates informational and overview pieces about the university to accompany presentations by faculty administrators. For example, the provost took a program dubbed in Chinese on a trip to China.

- Oregon State's Keith Riggs produced a 13-minute program aimed at getting corporations interested in a new Advanced Science and Technology Institute. While the program was designed as a selling tool, Riggs says, "It wasn't cost-effective to have that be its only purpose, so the program was written so it could be shown to civic groups and alumni gatherings." He also produced an hour-long information program for statewide public TV on the pros and cons of starting an income tax in the state.
- The University of Nebraska put a video presentation together to help the state explain why General Motors should locate its new Saturn auto plant in Nebraska. (The presentation went well, but GM selected a Tennessee site.) Assistant Information Director Robert Van Neste has also produced video training programs for campus police and university housing.

Big investment, big dividends

The possibilities for video in your PR program are limited only by your imagination and your resources. Nebraska's Van Neste says, "While it may take some salesmanship to get video started, it results in an enormous plus for university public relations. After the initial capital investment, it's dirt cheap and well worth the expense."

And once you have video capability, you'll be surprised how quickly the demand for video productions will mushroom. Miami's Bonnett says, "The demand has snowballed. We can't keep up with all the requests."

Oregon State's Keith Riggs adds, "Not only does video reach more people through television, but it has credibility, because television has a high degree of believability."

Video is no longer the wave of the future. It's the medium of the present. Institutions that ignore video's potential may be saving dollars in the short run but losing the information and PR battle in the long run.

Technical Tips and Techniques

For those of you with access to video equipment, here are some tips to help you create successful video productions.

- *Relate the specific story to larger relevant issues.* This tells viewers why the story is important. For example, we did a video story on salmonella research and related it to a then-current milk contamination problem in the Midwest.
- *Make your report's central point in your script.* State your focus in a simple sentence early in the program.
- *Don't overwrite.* The words should enhance the visuals. Don't insult your viewers' intelligence by telling them things they already know. Write loosely enough so that the story can breathe, especially when the visuals can communicate the message more eloquently by themselves.
- *Tell the story through people whenever possible.* Viewers would rather watch people engaged in visually compelling action than look at someone simply talking to a camera.
- *Make sure your story is like an onion—with many layers.* These different layers will hold the entire piece together. For example, give a recruiting piece one layer that appeals to the viewer's emotions, another that relates specific admissions-oriented information, and a third that differentiates your institution from others.
- *Begin with a strong visual lead.* This picture should tell your viewer instantly what the story is about.
- *Build your videos around sequences.* This means using long, medium, and close shots to show an action or process as it progresses. Use sequences to compress the time of the action when necessary.
- *Put your visuals in a logical order.* One scene should hand off to the next, as in a relay race.
- *Look for things that will make the story memorable.* Try to use magic moments and surprises. These little moments sustain viewer involvement and make the story come alive.
- *Make sure your perspective is appropriate.* For example, when doing a story on children or pets, get the camera down to their eye level.
- *Use natural sound to bring the story to life and increase the emotional impact.* Good natural sound, such as background noise from traffic or people talking, allows viewers to experience the program rather than just watch it.
- *Use appropriate music to convey the story's emotional context.* For example, your fight song is not appropriate for a story about a fire on campus. However, it may work nicely as part of a fund-raising appeal to replace the damaged building. Try not to overuse fight songs; they can make your program a cliche.
- *Use reaction shots.* These will increase the power of your action shots.
- *Use a tripod as much as possible.* In cases when you don't, make sure the shots are steady so they don't distract the viewers.
- *Use two lights when artificial lighting is necessary.* If your camera has a light mounted on top, take it off; it creates a flat, uncomplimentary effect. Instead, use a key and a fill light positioned at 45-degree angles to your subject. He or she will look even better if you use an umbrella—it produces a soft, pleasing light. Another plus—using a daylight filter to match the artificial light with what's coming in from outside.
- *Vary your shots.* Do this not only by shooting long, medium, and close shots but also by varying the length and the angle of shots.

However, be careful not to jolt viewers with a drastic visual change that reminds them a camera is there. Keep zooming and panning to a minimum for the same reason.

- *Don't cross the action axis between the viewer and the subject without using a neutral shot as a transition.* When you cross the axis, a subject going left to right will suddenly appear to have changed direction and be going right to left.
- *Keep the sound bites short.* Don't use the comments from those on camera as substitutes for effective narration. Sound bites should highlight the storytelling, not overpower it.
- *Don't forget cut-aways.* Cut-aways help bridge scenes that don't go together, such as jump-cuts.
- *Use a strong close, one that you've built toward throughout the program.* The close should be a visual that says, "This is the end." —RMC

The Case for Cable

A community college-produced TV show turns into a successful government relations tool

by G. Jeremiah Ryan and Thomas Nesterak

Any government-assisted college knows how important it is to cement cordial relations with its government sponsors. But creating—and maintaining—positive relationships with those officials can be time-consuming and expensive.

At Brookdale Community College, we found in our own telecommunications department an effective and relatively inexpensive tool for improving government relations. We use the college's successful cable television show to make connections both with public officials and the public itself. Those connections have produced good will and increased communication—and they may well have prompted officials to approve bigger and better appropriations for our college.

Our medium is a student-produced, faculty-directed, 30-minute weekly video magazine. "Line-Out" airs on four of the area's five local cable television channels. The show serves several primary purposes:

- It demonstrates the strength of our telecommunications program. Besides speaking well for the college, the show's quality may also attract potential students who are interested in television production.
- It gives students professional experience in television production. Each semester, about 10 students work as interns in both technical and creative capacities.
- It increases the college's local visibility. The program deals solely with the people, activities, and concerns of Monmouth County in central New Jersey. Our crews generate a great deal of excitement when we go into the field, and we have developed a regular local audience. The show has thus become an effective public relations tool for the college.

Creating public interest

Of particular note to us, however, is how one feature of this cable show has helped our government relations program. That feature is the "In the Public Interest" segment, which presents interviews with state and local officials from Monmouth County, the college's sponsor. "In the Public Interest" accounts for eight to 10 minutes of each week's "Line-Out."

Central New Jersey does not have strong local television coverage. Our "local" stations originate in Philadelphia and New York City. What New Jersey news they do offer tends to be big stories or stories close to the two large cities.

When we began to produce "In the Public Interest" in January 1982, we felt that people in our county knew the New York City Council better than they knew their own public officials. So we set out to introduce those local officials to our viewers.

We began the series by interviewing the county prosecutor about his duties and the reorganization of his office. Later, we followed a state assembly member through part of his day at the State House.

As the series of interviews developed, we became more issue-oriented. We asked Sen. Bill Bradley about federal tax cuts to higher education, and later we discussed state support for the community college with Gov. Thomas Kean.

Presenting a public image

As we gained more experience with the show, we developed a professional process for producing the interviews. We tape each piece to fill our time slot with little or no editing. And we tape no more than a month in advance, so officials' comments on current issues won't seem dated.

Brookdale's government relations coordinator conducts each interview. He focuses on a predetermined topic, and the whole interview process takes less than a half-hour of an official's time. We usually begin the visit with a campus forum and end with lunch with the college president.

We've also established a few rules:

- *We avoid interviews with public officials running for re-election.* First, we don't want to imply that the college endorses any candidate. Also, our production schedule would prevent us from granting requests for equal time.
- *We decided in the beginning to avoid highly controversial issues.* That's because we don't want to portray the college as advocating any one position. However, as the series progressed, we found that we could treat controversial issues in a panel format. We invited representatives from each side to discuss the issues, with our interviewer acting as moderator. This represents the college as a forum for the free exchange of ideas. In this format, we've addressed such issues as smoking in public places and legalizing marijuana.
- *We try to keep a guest as relaxed as possible before the taping.* The guest meets our interviewer in his campus office, and they spend some time chatting informally. Most of the technical preparation is done before the guest arrives at the studio. There, we try to keep the atmosphere light and comfortable. The interviewer continues the informal conversation while we take care of sound levels and other last-minute details. Ideally, the guest has no time to get nervous, and the conversational tone holds up through the interview.
- *During that pre-production conversation, we avoid asking the questions we plan to use during the taping.* Otherwise, taped responses may appear stale or rehearsed, since the guest has just made the same statements. Or the guest may make confusing references to untaped material.

G. Jeremiah Ryan is vice president of institutional advancement at Monroe Community College in Rochester, NY. He was formerly a research and development officer at Brookdale Community College in Lincroft, NJ. Thomas Nesterak is an assistant professor at the Telecommunications Learning Center at Brookdale. Previously, he was an assistant professor and telecommunications production coordinator there.

Courting public officials

"In the Public Interest" has several purposes. It provides the public service of informing local citizens about their government. It demonstrates the college's commitment to serving the public in this way. It brings major local issues—often issues of concern to the college—into the public eye. And it allows us to present our positions on those issues directly to both the public officials involved and the television audience.

And the process of producing "In the Public Interest" helps us cultivate the college's relationship with its government sponsors in a number of important ways.

- The officials appreciate the invitation to appear because it gives them public exposure.
- They get a close look at the campus and watch hard-working students produce a quality product.
- The interview process gives the government relations coordinator a chance to establish a positive relationship with the official.
- Our president gets to state his legislative priorities with the legislator, face to face, over lunch.

Cultivating public assistance

"In the Public Interest" may well have been a factor in some tangible long-term benefits, too. In FY 1984, the four Monmouth County state representatives who sat on the legislature's Joint Appropriations Committee supported an increase of almost 6 percent in appropriations. All four had appeared on "In the Public Interest" and were intimately familiar with the impact of state appropriations on Brookdale. In FY 1985, the legislators again appeared on the show and later recommended an increase of almost 12 percent in state appropriations.

One state assemblyman, whom we suspected of being—at best—cool to the college, appeared twice on the program. The second interview, done on the floor of the State Assembly Chamber while the House was in session, centered on a bond issue that he was sponsoring.

After that program, his relationship with Brookdale improved to the point where he sponsored a piece of special interest legislation for the college. The successful bill provided for a learning center in Asbury Park.

Thanks to the program, Brookdale has become a leader in a statewide effort to increase appropriations to community colleges. And tangible or intangible, the benefits of the interview show have been well worth the investment. By capitalizing on our existing magazine format, we've offered a service to the county's many cable TV viewers, increased public awareness of important issues, and, in the process, nurtured our friendships with our government sponsors.

Wired for Cable?

Don't miss out on opportunities to reach new audiences

by Harry Durham

Everybody's talking about the new revolution in communications—cable TV. It offers new opportunities for schools, colleges, and universities to reach important publics.

Yet when Nancy Miller of Penn State and I conducted a survey of institutions to discover how talk translates into action, the results were disappointing. Although many institutions are using cable TV, their involvement is traditional. Clearly, we are not taking full advantage of this medium. As you plan your institution's advancement programs, start thinking now about the cable connection.

Let's look at the facts. New cable TV subscribers are signing up at the rate of an estimated 250,000 a month. Today, about 25 percent of the nation's homes are wired for cable TV. In Canada, the figure is around 50 percent. By the end of the decade, experts believe that one out of every two households in the United States will be hooked up.

How it all began

Cable TV started in Pennsylvania in the late 1950s. There people discovered they could improve their TV reception by erecting a long antenna on a mountain top and sending the signal over coaxial cable to TV sets throughout the community. The idea quickly spread to other towns where normal television reception was poor. We called these early systems CATV (Community Antenna Television).

In the 1960s, CATV simply brought remote broadcasts into homes that could not receive them through regular single-set antennae. The cable system itself originated no signal. Later, enterprising cable operators began offering their subscribers extra services, such as a time and temperature channel and a community calendar channel.

When, in the 1970s, the Federal Communications Commission decided to deregulate cable TV and allow the market to determine its expansion, things began to happen. At about the same time, use of communications satellites developed rapidly. Cable operators found they could distribute programs to other cable systems by bouncing their signals off the satellites and catching them on dish-shaped ground terminals across the country. Their TV distribution costs were a fraction of those being borne by the commercial television networks that were tied to their stations through a wired system.

Ted Turner used this satellite cable arrangement to develop what he called the "Super Station," WTBS in Atlanta. Advertisers on WTBS are able to reach more viewers and cities than on any single television station in the country.

The networks view cable TV as a threat, and rightly so. If the national TV audience, now divided by three (ABC, CBS, NBC), is splintered by 60 or more channels, the networks have less to offer advertisers. But most observers say that network television will be with us for many years because of the networks' skill in producing and mar-

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keting programs. Live coverage of special events, including sports events, may become the most popular "mass" programs, while prerecorded entertainment and information will serve a large but fractured audience.

What's in it for us?

How can colleges and universities take advantage of the opportunities in this new television age? I believe there are two ways:

1. We can use cable TV's extra channels to offer campus events to audiences far beyond the geographic units of the campus itself; and
2. we can encourage faculty and staff members to produce material in electronic as well as written form for very specialized audiences.

One problem we've always had with commercial and even educational broadcast television is the limited broadcast time available. Most broadcasters weren't willing to provide an hour or even a half hour of prime-time (7 to 11 p.m.) television for a college event, no matter how worthy it might be. The broadcaster feared—usually correctly—that such programming would not be entertaining and would therefore cause viewers to switch to another channel.

The broadcaster has only *one* channel to offer. The cable operator has *many*. On cable TV, if the viewers don't like a program the college is offering on channel 36, they can tune to something else on channel 22, 4, 18, and so on. They don't disconnect from cable, so the cable operator fears no revenue loss by offering something for only a few thousand viewers.

Therefore, cable TV offers us the opportunity to present lectures, concerts, plays, and even sporting events to audiences unable to attend the events in person. Perhaps these cable TV offerings may provide some revenue to offset the costs of staging the event and showing it on TV. Such revenue may come directly from the viewers, who pay a fee to watch a certain program. Or it may come through advertising revenue from a sponsor who wishes to be identified with a particular event.

Faculty and staff have traditionally written for scholarly and some popular journals and periodicals. Cable TV allows faculty and staff to produce programs for clearly identified, though relatively small, audiences. For example, a historian, rather than publishing an article in a popular magazine, may wish to present a television program on the same topic, or do both.

Informative television programs, like "how-to-do-it" magazine articles, will be popular on cable TV. The success of this approach to cable TV will depend on how well we can identify special interest audiences. It will also depend on the incentives that college and university administrations offer faculty and staff to encourage them to produce these TV materials.

Education news and information officers will have to treat cable TV offerings in the same ways we now treat special campus events. We will have to publicize those offerings extensively in other media if they are to attract the special audiences we want. Direct mail will become a regular vehicle for promoting cable TV programming.

How we use cable TV

In spite of these opportunities, however, our survey results indicate that few institutions are taking full advantage of cable TV. An earlier CASE survey had turned up only 300 radio-TV specialists among 10,000 CASE member representatives. When we surveyed this group, 219 people (73 percent) responded. This was an excellent return.

Through our questionnaire, we wanted to find out what people are doing now with cable TV. Sixty-one percent of those responding report that they use TV, both cable and commercial, in their communications programs. Fifty-five percent use radio.

Of the 124 respondents whose communities have cable TV systems, only 77 say they regularly use cable TV in their advancement activities. Most of these 77 use the system in traditional ways—to publicize campus events through a daily community calendar, to broadcast sports events, and to offer credit and noncredit courses.

I found that two-year undergraduate institutions are most likely to offer the credit courses available on cable. Only a few four-year and graduate institutions offer credit courses. Instead, they use cable to broadcast sports events or to publicize campus events.

Among the respondents, there were only a few innovators. Roger Cushman, director of the news service at Illinois State University, says ISU students produce a nightly half-hour news summary of local and campus events shown on cable TV. The students receive academic credit for their work.

Leroy Morganti, director of public information at Delta State University, uses cable to rerun athletic events, music concerts, and general information shows. Other respondents send cassettes of their news stories to cable operators in their areas. Most, however, say their work with cable TV in their communities is just beginning.

The cable revolution is now. If you haven't already done so, talk to your local cable TV manager. Get to know what cable TV can do for your institution. It's a frontier you can't afford *not* to explore.

Be Prepared

Media training can help campus presidents control TV interviews

by Dennis R. Boxx

Hot studio lights bear down on you, the president of a well-known university. A quarrelsome reporter fires questions without an apparent direction or theme. Repeatedly interrupted, you raise your voice. Your face reddens, and you snap back at your inquisitor. After an eternity, "Cut!" ends the torment.

Is this "20/20" or "60 Minutes"? No, it's just a media training session, much like those conducted in government offices and corporate headquarters around the country. Each one has the same purpose—to teach senior executives like you how to handle yourself on television.

When confronted by the possibility of facing TV cameras, many campus presidents refuse to appear. Others go on camera but fail to prepare. Yet TV's impact can't be ignored. A recent *Newsweek* poll notes that 75 percent of us get our news from TV and radio. And a Roper poll shows that 51 percent say that when they receive conflicting news on public issues, TV is the medium they trust.

TV has been around for decades, but do you really understand the medium? Like some presidents, you may think reporters are out for blood. Or you may believe the editing process intentionally defames. And, of course, you're used to operating on your own terms. So you feel rebellious when you can't control the reporting or editing process.

If you've ever refused a TV interview altogether, did you defend your decision by saying, "That's why we have PR people"? Yet look at two major crises of the last few years: Johnson & Johnson's chief executives faced the media after the Tylenol poisonings. More recently, Union Carbide's chief executives served as primary media spokespersons after the chemical disaster in India.

Let's face it. In today's communication-intense society, institutions that rely solely on PR spokespeople risk creating a credibility gap. Especially in a crisis, the public demands to see the top executives—the experts, the decision-makers. The people want to eyeball you, the CEO, and decide for themselves whether to believe what you say.

However, you'll find that few TV interviewers are hostile. In fact, TV can *serve* your institution by supporting recruitment, fund raising, community support, and lobbying efforts. It can also help you enhance credibility and set the record straight. More than likely, you'll be featured in "soft" edited interview formats, perhaps on a morning talk show or local news program. Regardless of the type of interview, if you're properly prepared, you can use TV interviews as an effective communication tool for your institution.

Because your job now includes communication, it's crucial that you put your message into language the public can understand. You must also learn to speak in 20-second bits for TV news. (A 90-second news story contains no more than 20 seconds from any one speaker.) Even at a breakneck pace, that translates into just 85 words. With but 85 words at your disposal, you had better be prepared.

Whom should you hire?

If you're now convinced that media training is a must, you need to decide who should conduct the training, and what it should include.

Whether a training program is best conducted by a public relations consultant or an in-house PR staff person is open to debate. Costs for outside consultants vary greatly. Fees for one- or two-day seminars range from $1,000 per day to $5,000 per day (plus expenses), depending on the number of executives trained.

Faced by a tight budget, you could turn to your college PR office for in-house training—if it has the expertise and the facilities. But remember, to be effective, your training should include candid, tough criticism of your efforts. So an outsider may work better. Consider having an outside media trainer come to your campus.

If your PR staff can't take on another job and you can't afford outside consultants, don't despair. Call on faculty in your communications, speech, or drama departments for help, and use available video recording equipment. While this approach may not offer the benefits of intensive training, it will give you a good opportunity to observe your on-camera performance. And if you know of any alumni who are particularly experienced in current TV interview techniques, ask them for help, too.

Regardless of who teaches the program or what label is attached to it, most TV training revolves around learning (1) how to look your best, (2) how to control the interview, and (3) how to communicate positive points.

Look your best

TV is a land of vanity, and anyone too proud or indifferent to accept that is doomed at the outset. Pay attention to these factors:

- *Appearance.* Dress conservatively. Medium blues, browns, and grays are best for suits. Solids are better than pinstripes. Avoid bright colors and large-patterned outfits. If you're a man, wear blue shirts—not reflective whites—with patterned ties. Your socks should be knee-length. If you're a woman, don't wear excessive jewelry and keep hosiery conservative. Your shoes (including soles) should be in good condition. No lapel buttons or pins on your jacket or dress. No bulky items in your pockets. Use light makeup to help reduce the shine from studio lights. Avoid light-sensitive glasses and extreme hairstyles.
- *Body language.* Sit straight. Lean slightly toward the host and look him or her in the eye. Don't shift your eyes

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from point to point when answering. Smile when appropriate, not out of nervousness. Cross your legs at the knee. Don't drum the chair or table with your fingers. Don't take a death grip on the chair, and don't swivel or constantly shift your position.

- *Listening and speaking.* Be cautious about nodding your head when, for example, you understand a question. It may erroneously signal your agreement. Listen carefully and attentively. Don't sit between two interviewers—you may look like a tennis ball by the end of the interview. Alter your voice so that you're not speaking in a monotone. Be enthusiastic. And always speak to the host, not the camera.

Maintain control

Whether you control the interview depends on your attitude. If you see yourself as an interviewee only, you are in a passive mode. This makes you give up control of the topic and lose credibility as an authoritative, knowledgeable speaker for your institution.

Here are some basic rules for gaining and retaining control:

- *Know your interviewer/host.* Be mentally prepared for the environment you are about to enter. Get your PR staff to do some research on the kind of stories or interviews the reporter usually does. What is the show's format? How long will you be on? Will it be live or taped?
- *Answer one question at a time.* If presented with a multi-part question, select the part you feel best addresses the issue you want to discuss.
- *Correct inaccurate facts or misconceptions stated by the reporter.* Be polite, but don't let important inaccuracies pass by.
- *Don't allow the reporter to interrupt.* Be polite but firm. Ask to be allowed to give full answers.
- *Don't let the reporter put words in your mouth.* Some reporters summarize what you've said—or what they think you said. Don't let that summary mislead.
- *Don't argue or appear hostile.* Strive to be liked. Remember that an audience is more inclined to believe someone it likes.
- *Don't feed the mike.* Dead air is the reporter's problem, not yours. After you've finished answering, don't feel obligated to go on and on.
- *If the interview is being taped, start an answer over if you blow it.* It may seem awkward at the time, but you'll feel better when you see the results later.
- *Don't go off the record.* The interview ends only when the reporter and you part company.

Communicate positively

Learning how to communicate positive and well-conceived points is the most critical lesson of any TV training. Decide in advance the two or three most important points *you* want to make. Then, during the interview, focus on them as often as possible. Remember, the reporter probably knows little about your subject area. Use your expertise to direct the interview to your points. Also, remember these rules:

- *Avoid jargon or acronyms.* Use simple English.
- *Use short, concise answers.* Make them no longer than 20 to 30 seconds.
- *Flag important points.* For example, you can say "The most critical issue here is . . . ." Editors under tight deadlines are more likely to mention the points you emphasize.
- *If you don't know the answer, say so.* Never say, "No comment." If you can't give a response, give the reason: legal propriety, pending investigation, and so on. Then bridge into areas you want to discuss.
- *Rephrase long or loaded questions.* Convert them into questions you can or want to answer, and give positive answers.
- *Think before you speak.* Don't formulate a response as you talk.
- *Anticipate likely questions and review possible responses.* These should be on both positive and negative issues.
- *Give the same answers to repeated questions.* Don't get caught giving inconsistent answers. Besides, repetition helps make your point.
- *Don't repeat negative words used in the question.* And avoid answering "what if" questions.
- *Make your final comment clear and concise.* Use it to re-emphasize your main point.

Prepare for the unpredictable

Most training seminars offer a chance to learn these techniques in a variety of settings and formats. The training generally combines predictable situations and surprises—predictable because you expect the interviews and critiques, surprising because, to the uninitiated, the TV medium is peculiar and often disarming. If you see the need for and value of TV training and approach it with the right attitude, your new TV skills will serve you well in almost any interview.

At the very least, you'll learn the answer to this:

What can you get across to an audience in 85 words?

Plenty, if you're prepared!

Be Yourself

And nine other TV rules for presidents who want to stay cool under hot lights

by Jack Hilton

During the last two presidential campaigns, ABC and CBS television paid me to wax expert about the candidates' TV performances in news interviews, press conferences, and head-to-head debates. Because TV wants everything bite-sized and summarized, one of the ABC producers on "Good Morning America" had me devise the 10 most important "rules" for presidential candidates on TV.

They're the same ones I recommend for you as a college president. And here they are.

1. *Be yourself.* To borrow a slogan from ABC Sports: Television is "up close and personal." Put on airs and the audience will see through you like an X-ray. President Lyndon Johnson, an earthy wheeler-dealer in private, concluded (probably correctly) that his *real* persona wasn't sufficiently presidential for public consumption. So he assumed a De Gaulle-like pose for TV—and frequently came across like the droning narrator of a third-rate historical pageant. LBJ was playing a role, not being himself.

2. *Be likable.* Two of your role models should be the late President Kennedy for his grace and wit (occasionally self-deprecating), and President Reagan for his warmth and affability. If your TV audience likes you, it may listen to you more closely and be more inclined to accept what you say—and even agree with you. If your audience doesn't like you, the steel curtain slams down.

3. *Be prepared.* Here's where your football coach can help. Preparing for a Q-and-A is like getting ready for a Saturday afternoon in October.

First there's the defensive game plan. Anticipate the questions you may be asked. Decide beforehand how you'll answer. Ad-libbing in public on matters of importance is a no-no, but don't use a script either. Just get your salient points on each topic lined up in order of importance and rehearse out loud.

Next comes the offensive game plan. Ask yourself: "What in the world compelled me in the first place to accept this invitation to boil slowly under TV's hot lights? What do I want to accomplish for alma mater?" Don't be greedy, but you're certainly entitled to raise a few on-air points of your own, not necessarily in response to someone else's questions. Remember, this is a TV *conversation,* not the Spanish Inquisition. Be prepared to take the initiative when the opportunity arises. You may well be able to redirect the flow of dialogue to a topic of your choice.

"Time of possession" is important, too, but I'll explain when I tell you about "bridging" (Rule 9).

4. *Be enthusiastic.* Not like a cheerleader, however. Conviction is what I'm talking about, and you convey conviction to your audience through the vitality and intensity of your presentation. If *you* don't seem convinced, you won't convince us.

5. *Be specific.* We the general public are a dispassionate audience, and there are certain points you want us to remember when "Donahue" ends. So fix those points in our minds vividly, colorfully, and, as a result, memorably.

Also, something isn't so just because you *say* it's so. We're not the freshman class. Back up assertions with facts, examples, statistics, and even pertinent personal experiences.

Repetition is okay, too. The oldest rule of both education and advertising clearly applies here: "Tell us what you plan to tell us. Then tell us. Then tell us what you told us." Maybe we'll remember.

6. *Be correct.* Being correct comes from being prepared. Being incorrect about one little thing can undermine your credibility *in toto* (as President Reagan occasionally demonstrates).

7. *Be anecdotal.* If TV is "up close and personal," use it that way. You're not addressing both houses of Congress. You're in a living room with friends. Don't pontificate or argue. Tell us stories in everyday language.

8. *Listen.* Don't tune out of a question halfway through it because you think you know where your interrogator is going. What you *don't* hear can hurt you. (That's how Gerald Ford bombed in his second '76 debate with Jimmy Carter—by answering a different question about Eastern Europe from the one he was asked.)

9. *Bridge.* Back to your football coach and "time of possession." Getting from defense to offense (and vice versa) requires an *exchange*—a kickoff, punt, fumble, interception, and so on. In conversational dynamics, an exchange occurs when one participant "bridges" another and takes the initiative. A bridge gets you from where you are in a discussion *to where you want to be* on topics of your choice.

Successful bridging requires a smooth connecting phrase, clause, or sentence as a preface. "Let me put that matter in a slightly different perspective for you." Or, "Let's consider the larger issue here." (The permutations are endless.) If you're asked about a *problem* at your institution, don't dwell on it, unless it's the problem you've come to discuss. Talk about the *solution.* Getting from the former to the latter is up to you—and six or eight words of bridging should be enough to do the job.

10. *Be cool.* Few of your TV encounters will be confrontational, but heated discussions aren't unprecedented. Don't *you* be heated, however. Audiences usually side with the more composed combatants. "Don't get mad, get even," said Joseph P. Kennedy. Mahatma Gandhi said it even better: "When you're in the right, you can afford to keep your temper. When you're in the wrong, you can't afford to lose it."

Good luck!

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Radioactivity

You're missing a bet if your PR program isn't tuned in to radio

by Nancy Huber Miller

Radio may have appeared moribund in the '50s and '60s as television's audience expanded, but the tide has turned. Now radio is bigger than ever, with more stations, more diverse markets, and a larger audience. And there's no letup in sight.

If radio is big, it is also small. The length of individual program segments has been shrinking for many years.

When I joined the staff of the Penn State Department of Public Information in the summer of 1964, we were producing a daily series called "Penn State on the Line." The programs were about three minutes long. Then, that was considered a short segment.

Soon thereafter, we abandoned that format in favor of the one-minute public service announcement. That format survived until the mid-1970s. Then we found that nobody wanted a minute—and our PSAs became half-minutes.

Short is in

Today we are seeking to confine our copy, when possible, to 10- and 20-second formats. This is particularly necessary in the large metropolitan markets of Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Radio news, which most of us still agree provides the best radio exposure, has always conformed to shorter formats. A news story rarely exceeds a minute in length. Stories that get repeat exposure in good time slots are usually less than 45 seconds—and probably less than 30 seconds.

Long is in

If short is in, so is long. The most popular of these new longer formats is talk radio—talk meaning conversation between a studio host, guests, and listeners, who join in by telephone. Talk radio may have been around a long time, but it's never been given so much air time.

I had the great eye-opening experience of my professional life when I spent a recent summer in Pittsburgh working as a relief talk show host on that grand old lady of radio, KDKA. KDKA, in a market with 20 other radio stations, captures from 20 to 35 percent of the audience all the time. Half its day is music and news—6 a.m. until 6 p.m. The other half, nighttime, is talk. I worked those evening shifts.

We had five lines coming into the studio to accept calls from listeners. I don't recall a single minute in six weeks of air work that I didn't have people waiting to talk—and that includes 3 a.m., when they were backed up four-deep and holding on long distance because we were a clear-channel operation reaching 40 states at night.

When we interviewed an author, book stores were inundated with requests for the book. I hadn't been on the air two days when I started getting fan mail—love letters, hate letters, and everything in between.

I tell you this to impress upon you that talk radio has listeners. Therefore, you might want to consider it for exposure for your institution. I lined up some Penn State professors, some University of Pittsburgh people, and some guests from smaller colleges. They attracted attention. If you've got professors or staff members who are articulate, thick-skinned, and quick on their feet, put them on the radio talk circuit. They'll be heard. (But if they're dull, they'll be heard, too.)

All-news stations are also popular. They allow slightly longer coverage of individual stories. Because these stations eat up material at a great rate, your stories have a good chance.

Then there's National Public Radio, the last real stronghold for longer programs. A couple of years ago Clemson University produced a fine series of half-hour programs on women for NPR. Clemson's Harry Durham confesses that he wanted to make the programs shorter, but NPR wanted them 30 minutes long.

NPR news attracts a great deal of respect and a lot of listeners, too. We're all missing out if we don't produce something for NPR.

And variety is in

If radio is bigger than ever, shorter than ever, and longer than ever, it is also more varied than ever before.

When I was growing up on a farm in Southern Pennsylvania, we had two kinds of radio stations. There were the "regular kind"—middle of the road—and the "other kind," a combination of what we call hillbilly and religious.

Today the middle of the road stations are called "adult contemporary." "Hillbilly" is better known as "country and western." And religious stations are the same as always. But *Broadcasting* magazine identifies at least two dozen formats before it reaches the category called "other."

There are country and western, jazz, rock, disco, golden oldies, and concert music stations. There are strictly "top 40" formats and underground formats—these often located on our own college campuses.

The popularization of FM has caused the proliferation in radio. Today nearly everyone owns an FM receiver, often in the car. As a result, FM, with its capabilities for discernibly better sound, has opened up as a money maker. As a consequence, hundreds of new stations have become serious contenders for the listening market. Witness the fact that 20 years ago, when FM receivers were uncommon, the FM affiliate of an AM station was often simulcasting with an almost negligible audience of its own. Today AM and FM have split, and in many markets, including our own in State College, Pennsylvania, the FM operations are attracting the larger audiences and selling the more expensive advertising.

Implications for us

What does this mean for us, as college and university communicators, when we set out to use radio? Here are some

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reminders:

1. *Recognize radio.* We need to acknowledge radio if we want to "sell" our product. Radio reaches more people than any other medium.

2. *Analyze the cost advantages.* Radio is still a bargain in cost per thousand. That's true if you're buying advertising for your institution. It's also true if you go the PSA route and compare your cash outlay for preparing and delivering print releases. And it's certainly true if you go into radio news production and compare the costs of this activity with those of preparing and delivering press releases.

3. *Realize radio's limitations.* Certainl we, as promoters of education, should work with all media and not just radio. This would be as disastrous as relying entirely on print. After all, the 10- to 60-second time slots place pretty strict limits on what your radio message can accomplish.

4. *Adapt to radio, a headline medium.* The five tidy W's (who, what, when, where, and why) that delight journalism students are not just the beginning of the story for radio. They *are* the story.

Similar time restrictions apply to producing good radio PSAs and commercials. You must confine your message to a single concept. If you have more than one concept, you must have more than one message. And if you want any message to stay with your audience, you must repeat it over and over. Then, and only then, will they know that "Winston tastes good like a cigarette should," or that Coca-Cola is truly "the pause that refreshes."

Customizing for radio

Coca-Cola's advertising approach also illustrates how radio can be customized. I am told that those musical Coca-Cola commercials on TV are not quite the same from region to region. The cast in the Coke commercials that I see over Altoona television is not necessarily the cast that you see in Detroit or Seattle. The song is the same, but the singers change.

Why? So that you identify with these people and see them as part of *your* neighborhood. Advertisers wouldn't spend the big bucks that customizing costs if they didn't get results.

And, in fact, customizing is the name of the game in radio today. Just as stations vie for particular audiences, we need to think about gearing our radio messages to particular stations' formats. That's why it's less and less practical to produce one PSA or commercial, make 150 copies of it, and send it to 150 stations.

This is particularly true if we are producing a segment that has a distinct sound: a voice with a dialect, a voice of a certain aged person, or a music bed. Popular as blue grass is today, I can't imagine a down-home music bed on a PSA for a disco station.

Radio folks talk a lot about "blending." That means keeping their individual segments compatible so the station has a unified sound. We need to keep that goal in mind when we set out to blend our messages into these many different formats.

Of course, part of customizing and blending involves tailoring the production to different age groups. Every station targets its messages to specific age groups. Why should a radio spot for the 12- to 25-year-old market speak as effectively to the 25-to-50 market?

A call for quality

Customizing to achieve blend has another important implication for radio producers in school, college, and university PR offices. Quite frankly, many of us need to work harder to customize our sound to the professional sound that radio demands today. Too many past productions have smacked of amateurism. They were poorly conceived and badly produced.

Even at small stations, production standards are up; boring is out. Moreover, competition for air time is keen, and everyone is producing PSAs. Unless your spots sparkle, they're unlikely to be aired.

If you can afford to buy time, you may choose how often and when your message is presented. However, even then, if your message is poorly planned, you're probably throwing away money.

Remember, you're competing for listeners' attention as well as stations' air time. Capturing that attention requires your best thinking.

Good Vibrations

Radio actualities build station excitation

by John William Zehring

If you've been considering radio as a medium for your college's message, consider these facts:

- More people (56 percent) get their first morning news from radio than from any other source, acccording to the National Association of Broadcasters. TV and newspapers come in a distant second and third (21 and 16 percent, respectively.)
- Radio news stories often air between six and 24 times a day. Imagine a town with two AM and two FM stations, each airing your story an average of 10 times. That means your college's story is broadcast 40 times a day.
- Any radio news has the impact of front-page news. And radio plays in banks, stores, barber shops, restaurants, and other public places.
- Radio reaches a higher percentage of upscale consumers, professional/managerial workers, and college-educated adults than newspapers.
- A person must make an effort *not to hear* a radio message, whereas a person must make an effort *to read* a newspaper.
- Ninety-nine percent of American homes (not to mention 95 percent of all new cars) are radio equipped. About 470 million radio sets were in circulation in 1982. The average American household has 5.5 radios, a 47 percent increase since 1970.

The case for radio can go on, but

the bottom line is clear. Few media have a greater impact in a shorter time than radio. The question is, why don't more higher education PR people focus attention on getting radio coverage?

One reason, of course, may be that they write for the eye rather than the ear. Or they may just not know how to get their message on the local radio station's newscast.

Don't let either of these reasons deter you. Radio is an easy medium to use once you get the hang of it.

Use actualities

An actuality is simply a tape recording of a newsmaker's voice. What you do is tape record an interview with your campus newsmaker. Select a section of what he or she says to be the actuality. Then edit the actuality in the story.

Actualities are to radio as photographs are to newspapers. They're so important that the lack of one can cause a radio news director to toss out an interesting story.

One benefit of producing radio news the way the pros do it: Radio stations often have small news staffs and will use your taped story much more readily than they will use a printed news release.

What equipment do you need to produce actualities? If you have access to two tape recorders and a microphone, about the only other equipment you'll need are a few dollars' worth of cords. At Earlham College's office of college relations, where I formerly worked, we outfitted our office for less than $200, including the tape recorders.

Some professionals feel that it's essential to use a ¼-inch reel-to-reel tape recorder with a cassette tape recorder rather than two cassette tape recorders to produce professional quality actualities. They say that transferring the cuts you've selected for your actuality onto a reel-to-reel allows you then to edit by hand. You cannot hand-edit if you use two cassette tape recorders.

If you decide to go the reel-to-reel route, be sure to get a ¼-inch tape machine that is of professional quality and allows the editing through easy access to the recorder's heads. Although this may seem like lots of trouble, you should understand that cassette-to-cassette or electronic editing does not allow the flexibility and precision of mechanical reel-to-reel editing.

The basic setup includes:

- two cassette tape recorders, one for the interview or actuality, the other to edit into (or one cassette tape recorder and a reel-to-reel recorder);
- a patch cord to run between the two recorders;
- a microphone and, if you do a lot of radio business, a microphone stand and/or boom;
- an earplug;
- a device to connect your tape recorder to the telephone, if you are not hand-carrying the tape to the stations (once you know the news directors, the phone works best);
- a microphone mixer; and
- an equalizer.

Short of giving the tape cassette to a radio station, it is much faster and just as effective to hook into a telephone. That's how radio news reporters report when they're on the road.

In many places, the telephone company can't tell you how to hook into its telephone system, although your local radio or electronics store can. There are two basic ways:

1. Spend a few dollars on a patch cord that plugs into your tape recorder's earphone plug on one end and has alligator clips on the other. When you are ready to call in the news story, unscrew the mouthpiece of your phone and clip the alligator clips to the wires. Voila—a direct connection.

2. Buy a device that plugs into your phone jack. A multi-line connector that allows you to plug into phones with more than one line is available from an electronics store.

Consider using an equalizer as part of your feeding system. Stations that receive actualities from institutions that use equalizers respond enthusiastically. Why? Simply put, telephone lines often reduce the quality of a voice as it is transmitted from your studio to the station. With the equalizer, you can overcome this loss of quality.

How to produce good radio news

Here are some tips for getting the most impact from radio.

1. *Start with your institution's name.* Weave your college's name and the basic facts into the story in such a way that the story wouldn't work without them both. But be careful not to use the name too much. The radio staff might see your stories as self-serving or as advertising and toss them.

2. *Give them more than they need.* Provide about 60 to 90 seconds of tape to radio stations. If the tape is too long, the radio station will edit and cut. But if it's too short, the radio staffers will have nothing else to add.

3. *Minimize their work to maximize your results.* The less work the radio news crews must do, the higher the chances that they will use your story. For this reason, a tape with actuality is better than a printed news release. With actualities, radio news people don't have to go looking for an interview themselves.

There may be times when you don't have all the equipment you need readily available. You may have to read the release over the phone and then play the actuality from your only tape recorder. That will work, but editing your story together is one more thing the station staff must do. The easier you make it for the radio station, the higher your odds for success.

4. *Use two actualities when desirable.* Two actualities, with a comment between, make the story move faster and seem shorter. This also provides the radio news department with a choice if the story must be cut.

5. *Select the actualities carefully.* Don't let your subject ramble on. Even a sentence or two can provide a suitable actuality, and sometimes a short actuality is preferable. You are trying to give listeners a "picture" of the subject, not an album.

6. *Write for the ear, not the eye.* After you have written the script, read it aloud. It may sound different from what you expected. Remember that you are writing something to be spoken, not read.

7. *Write your story so that it demands to be heard.* Like any writing, the quality of your work will determine whether it gets used. This is one place where serious writers can shine: Your work will stand out from routine or poorly written releases.

8. *Call in tips.* Some feature stories

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are better done by the station. Your role then is to provide the tip. Call the news director with a suggestion for the story and give the name and phone number of your source. The station doesn't have to dispatch a reporter to "cover" a feature story unless it involves an event. The station can do a telephone interview.

9. *Analyze local newscasts.* When you write for magazine or book publishers, you wouldn't think of putting pen to paper without first examining sample copies of their work. This is also true for radio. Analyze your local newscasts to see how broadcasters present their stories. (And count how many actualities they use.) Also, make a point to meet local radio news directors and learn directly from them about their needs and expectations.

Radio has been around for a long time. Too often we take it for granted and overlook its usefulness in reaching our audiences. Don't make that mistake. Make the most of radio in your PR program.

Broadcasting Terms

Compiled by Annette H. Lee

Compiled from various sources:
A and B rolling: The mixing of two sources from "A" and "B" tapes.
AC: Alternating current, the electrical energy found in conventional wall outlets.
Actuality: A taped excerpt, the actual sound of the person speaking in a radio news story. (Called sound bite in video.)
AFTRA: American Federation of TV and Radio Artists.
Ambient noise: Background sound.
ASCAP: American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers, a nonprofit, music-licensing organization.
Assemble edit: Addition of new video material following program material already recorded. Does not require existing control track on the tape.
Audio: The sound portion of radio and television and its production. Technically, the electronic reproduction of audible sound.
Audio track: The particular area on audio or videotape that carries audio information. On multitrack machines, the tape holds a number of separate audio tracks.

Back light: The light used to illuminate the back of someone's head to separate the person from the background.
Barn doors: Metal flaps in front of lighting instruments that control the spread of the light beam.
Betacam: A half-inch broadcast format tape and the camera that uses it.
Betamax: A half-inch cassette standard developed by the Sony Corporation (non-broadcast).
Bite: See sound bite.
Black: The darkest portion of the gray scale. In terms of program switching, "black" refers to a video source that provides sync signals but no picture.
Blast filter: A microphone attachment (either external or built-in) that suppresses wind noise and breath popping. Also called a "pop filter" or "wind filter."
BMI: Broadcast Music, Inc.
Border: Edges that are electronically produced to visually separate and distinguish wipes, split screens, or lettering.
Bulk eraser: A device that produces a strong magnetic field; used to quickly erase audio or video magnetic tapes, cartridges, and cassettes.
Bump-down: A dub onto a smaller-format tape.
Bump-up: A dub onto a larger-format tape.
Burn-in: Image retention by the camera pickup tube, caused by excessively bright subject, extreme contrast, or photographing a static scene for extended period of time. Also called "sticking" or "lag."

Camera Control Unit (CCU): Equipment containing the various controls necessary to set up, align, and regulate camera operation. Includes waveform monitor, television monitor, and shading controls.
Cardioid microphone: Microphone with a heart-shaped, directional pickup pattern.
Cartridge: A video or audio tape recording or playback device that uses tape cartridges. A cartridge is a plastic case containing an endless tape loop that rewinds as it plays back, and cues itself automatically. Also called "cart" for short.
CATV: Community antenna television, an alternate name for cable distribution.
CCTV: Closed-circuit TV, or video distribution through receiving sites physically wired to the source.
Character generator: A keyboard device used to create letters, numbers, and simple characters in a video form.
Chroma-keying: The replacement of part of a video picture with the corresponding part of another shot by punching a "hole" in a picture where a certain color appears. It is used to insert pictures on part of a set backdrop, as commonly seen in news programs, or to place a person in a setting in which he or she is not physically present.
Clip: (1) The control on the video switcher that is used to regulate the intensity of a matte, key, or insert. (2) A short piece of film or videotape that is rolled into a program. (3) To abruptly cut off.
Close-up: A shot filling the screeen with a small detail or just a person's head and shoulders. Also called a tight shot.
Color bars: A standard test signal used as a reference when setting up equipment.

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Composite signal: A complete video signal with sync pulse.

Control room: An area that contains audio and video controls, such as a mixer and a switcher for a TV studio.

Control track: The area of the videotape that contains information used to control and synchronize the playback and videotape editing operations.

Cover shot: A wide-angle shot giving basic orientation of place and action; covers a great area.

Crawl: The graphics (usually credit copy) that move slowly up the screen. More exactly, an up-and-down movement of credits is called a roll; a horizontal movement, a crawl. Both the roll and the crawl can be produced by the character generator.

Cross-fade: The simultaneous fade-in of one audio source as another is faded out. Can also be used to vary two lighting effects. In video, the transition is called a "dissolve."

Cue: (1) The signal to begin a program, action, dialogue, or other production activity. (2) To preset film, videotape, audiotape, or records, so that they will be available immediately when called for by the program's director.

Cue card: A hand-lettered card that contains copy, usually held next to the camera lens by floor personnel. Also called an idiot sheet.

Cue track: An area on video tape reserved for additional audio information or to carry SMPTE time code information for tape editing.

Cut: (1) An instantaneous change from one shot to another. (2) A particular segment in a record or tape, usually indicated by a number, as in "Cut #2."

Cutaway: A shot that focuses on a view other than the principal action. Used frequently to provide transitional footage or to avoid a jump cut.

DC: Direct current, usually provided by special electrical sources or power generators.

Deck: (1)Videotape deck—short form of video recorder. (2) Audio recorder deck—usually the recording and playback device without the amplifer. (3) Videotape editing deck—a videotape recorder with editing facilities, used in conjunction with a second videotape recorder that supplies the program material.

Depth of field: The area in which all objects, located at different distances, appear in focus. Depth of field is dependent upon focal length of the lens, f-stop, and distance between object and camera.

Dish: An antenna designed to receive satellite transmission.

Dissolve: To gradually fade out one shot while simultaneously fading in another.

Dolly: (1) Camera support that enables the camera to move in all directions. (2) To move the camera toward (dolly in) or away from (dolly out or back) the object.

Down-link: A receiving site for satellite transmission.

Dropout: The "glitches" or streaks in a picture caused by a breakdown in the tape coating.

Dub: The duplication of an electronic recording. Dubs can be made from tape to tape or from record to tape. The dub is always one generation down (away) from the recording used for the dubbing and is therefore of lower quality.

Dubbing down: The dubbing (transfer) of picture and sound information from a larger videotape format to a smaller one.

Dubbing up: The dubbing (transfer) of picture and sound information from a smaller videotape format to a larger one.

ECU: Extreme close-up. Same as XCU.

Editing on the fly: (1) Directing a multicamera production, with the director calling shots as the show progresses. (2) Editing videotape without an edit programmer, which requires the edit to be timed perfectly and made as both playback and edit/record VTRs are in operation.

Editor: A VTR that can perform clean edits.

EFP: Electronic field production; shooting video generally with one camera out of the studio.

Electronic A-B rolling: The editing of a master tape from two playback machines, one containing the A-roll and the other the B-roll. By routing the A and B playback machines through a switcher, a variety of transition effects can be achieved for the final master tape.

Electronic editing: Rearranging and "cutting" segments by means of duplication.

Ellipsoidal spotlight: A spotlight that produces hard, directional light. Internal shutters permit distribution control, and a pattern slot enables the ellipsoidal to project shadow patterns. Also called a "Leko."

ENG: Electronic news gathering. A production style using small portable equipment for high mobility in the field, as pioneered by broadcast news.

Equalization: (1) Video—controlling the video signal by emphasizing certain frequencies and eliminating others. (2) Audio—controlling the audio signal by emphasizing certain frequencies and eliminating others. Equalization can be accomplished through an equalizer manually or automatically.

Essential area: The section of the television picture, centered within the scanning area, that is seen by the home viewer, regardless of masking of the set or slight misalignment by the receiver. Sometimes called the critical area.

Establishing shot: The opening shot of a show or scene, which orients the viewer to the surroundings; usually a wide shot.

Fade: A gradual increase or decrease of the video or audio signal. In video it is the gradual appearance of a picture from black or vice versa. In audio, it is the gradual increase or decrease in sound.

Feed: (1) The signal transmission from one program source to another, such as a network feed or a remote feed. (2) The transmission of a signal or a show from one point to another.

Field: (1) One-half a complete scanning cycle, two fields being necessary for one television picture frame. There are 60 fields per second, or 30 frames per second. (2) Any place not in the studio.

Fill light: The light used to fill in shadows on the side opposite the key light.

Film chain: A video camera, slide projector, and film projector in a unit designed to transfer film images to video.

First generation: An original recording, not a copy.
Fluid head: A camera mounting head that allows fluid or smooth camera tilts or pans.
Focus: A picture is in focus when it appears sharp and clear on the screen (technically, the point where the light rays refracted by the lens converge).
Foot-candle: The measure of light intensity, or unit of illumination. The amount of light produced by a single candle on a portion of a sphere one foot away. One foot-candle per sqaure foot is called one "lumen." (Foot-candles times the surface area in square feet equals lumens.)
Frame: One scanned video picture, appearing at 1/30 of a second during normal playback of a video program.
Freeze frame: Arrested motion, which is perceived as a still shot.
Friction head: A camera mounting head that counterbalances the camera weight by a strong spring. Good for relatively light cameras only.

Gain: The level of signal amplification for video and audio signal. "Riding gain," used in audio, means to keep the sound volume at a proper level.
Gel: A colored plastic or gelatinous material that is mounted in front of lighting instruments to produce colored light.
Generating element: The part of a microphone that transforms sound waves into electrical energy.
Genlock: (1) Locking the synchronizing generators from two different origination sources, such as remote and studio. Allows switching from source to source without picture rolling. (2) Locking the house sync with the sync signal from another source (such as videotape). The videotape can then be intermixed with live studio cameras, for example.
Ghost: Undesirable double image on screen, caused by signal reflection in poor reception areas.
Glitch: A picture interference or distortion that occurs momentarily.
Graphics: All visuals prepared for a production. Includes camera cards, slides, electronically generated letters and symbols, and special graphic set pieces.

Halo: A dark or colored flare around a very bright light source or a highly reflecting object. Same as flare.
Head: (1) Video head—a small electromagnet that puts electric signals on the videotape or reads (induces) the signals off the tape. Video heads are usually in motion. (2) Audio head—a small electromagnet that puts electric signals on the audiotape (recording head) or reads (induces) them off the tape (playback head) or erases the signal from the tape (erase head).
Headroom: The space left between the top of the head and the upper screen edge.
Horizontal sweep: The horizontal scanning.
Hotspot: An extremely bright concentration of light in one place relative to the surrounding illumination. Can create camera shading problems.

ID: Station identification.
Image retention: A comet-like smear that seems to follow a moving object. Especially noticeable when vidicon tubes are used under low-light-level conditions. Also called smear, lag, follow-image, comet-tailing.
In the can: A finished production that has been edited and is ready for film or videotape playback.
Incandescent light: The light produced by the hot filament of ordinary glass-globe lightbulbs (in contrast to fluorescent or quartz light).
In-cue: The beginning of a given portion of tape.
Industrial quality: A grade of video equipment not meeting the specifications of broadcast gear, but better than consumer-type home units.
Insert edit: Electronic videotape editing in which new video, audio, or both can be inserted into a previously recorded tape without disturbing material before and after the insert. Insert editing utilizes the existing control track and produces very stable edits.
Instantaneous editing: Same as switching.
IPS: Inches per second. Indicates the speed of audio or videotape during recording and playback.

Jack: (1) Stage brace to hold up a flat. (2) A socket or phone-plug receptacle (female).
Jog: To slowly move helical videotape back and forth in order to locate a precise edit point.
Joystick: A hand-operated control that offers 360 degrees positioning. Used in switchers to position a cutout insert and in some videotape edit programmers to control the operations of the VTRs. Also used on some audio consoles to pan a sound channel when mixing in stereo.
Jump cut: Cutting between shots that are identical in subject yet slightly different in screen location. Through the cut, the subject seems to jump from one screen location to another for no apparent reason.

Key: (1) An electronic effect. Keying means the cutting in of an image (usually lettering) into a background image. (2) Key light—principal source of illumination. (3) Lighting—high- or low-key lighting.
Kicker light: A light positioned at the rear and side of the subject.
Kill: To turn off a light, sound, or video feed. To cut or delete a line or portion of a program.
Knee shot: The framing of a person from the knees up.

Lavalier microphone: A small microphone designed to be hung from a cord or clipped to talent's tie, lapel, or blouse.
Lead-in: The anchor's headline introduction to a TV news story.
Level: (1) Audio—sound volume. (2) Video—signal strength (amplitude) measured in volts.
Light level: The light intensity measured in foot-candles.
Live on tape: A videotape production approach in which the show is produced with multiple cameras as though it were broadcast live. No postproduction editing is used.
Log: A description of the contents of a tape, scene by scene.
Long shot: A shot showing the overall scene; also called a wide shot.
Low-light-level gain: A boost of sensitivity for a camera when it is being operated in dim surroundings.

Magazine format: A program format consisting of a number of feature stories shot in different styles.

Master: An original audiotape, videotape, or film. Used for broadcast or to produce copies.

Master control: The nerve center for all telecasts. Controls the program input, storage, and retrieval for on-the-air telecasts. Also oversees technical quality of all program material.

Matte key: Keying a graphic or symbol over a background picture. The cut-out lettering can be electronically filled in with any color shade or gray.

Medium shot: A shot halfway between a close-up and a long shot; usually a person shot from the waist up.

Mixing: (1) Audio—the combining of two or more sounds in specific proportions (volume variations) as determined by the event (show) context. (2) Video—the combining of various shots via the switcher.

Moire effect: Spurious color patterns that appear in a television picture when certain stripes, checks, or other complex designs on fabrics or graphics interfere with the television system's scanning operation.

Monitor: (1) Audio—the speaker that carries the program sound independent of the line-out. (2) Video—the high-quality television receiver used in the television studio and control rooms. Cannot receive broadcast symbols.

Monitor/Receiver: A television receiver that can reproduce direct video and audio feeds (from the VTR, for example) as well as signals that are broadcast on a channel.

NABET: National Association of Broadcast Employees and Technicians. The union for studio and master control engineers; may include floor personnel.

Nat sound: The natural, ambient sound in background; also raw or wild sound.

Needle drop: A measure or unit of music determined by how many times a selection is played or the "needle dropped" on the record.

Noise: (1) Audio—the unwanted sounds that interfere with the intentional sounds; or unwanted sound signals. (2) Video—electronic interference that shows up as "snow."

Nose room: The space left in front of a person who is looking toward the edge of the screen. Also called lead room.

Off-line editing: Editing using inexpensive systems, allowing you to do "straight" editing only, without special effects or without the control of a computer interface.

Omnidirectional: The audio pickup pattern in which a microphone is designed to be equally sensitive to sounds emanating from all directions.

On-line editing: Editing using VTRs with a computer interface or with studio-type mixing and switching equipment.

Oscilloscope: An electronic measuring device showing certain electronic patterns on a small screen.

Out-cue: The end of a given portion of tape.

Over-the-shoulder shot (OS shot): A camera shot in which a subject is photographed framed by another subject's shoulder in the foreground. Induces depth in the shot.

Pan: To turn or swivel the camera from side to side.

Pantograph: Expandable hanging device for lighting instruments.

Patching: Interconnecting audio, video, or light cables into a common circuit for each.

Perspective: (1) Spatial relationships as they appear in a camera shot. (2) Sound perspective—the relationship of the sound quality to the visual image of the sound source.

Photographic principle: The triangular arrangement of key, back, and fill lights, with the back light opposite the camera and directly behind the object, and the key and fill lights opposite each other to the front and side of the object. Also called triangle lighting.

Pickup pattern: The pattern or direction with which a microphone is designed to cover sound.

Playback: The playing back on a monitor or television receiver of videotape-recorded material through a videotape recorder (in the playback mode).

Portapak: Formerly a trade name of the Sony Corporation for a highly portable camera and videotape unit, which could be easily carried and operated by one person. It now refers to all such equipment, regardless of manufacturer or model.

Postproduction: The activities of finishing a program through editing, mixing, and duplicating after the original has been shot.

Pot: Potentiometer—a control operated in a clockwise or counter-clockwise direction to vary the intensity of an electrical signal. Commonly refers to knob controls on audio console.

Pot-in: To fade in a sound source gradually with a pot or fader.

Preview monitor: (1) A monitor that shows the director the pictures he or she intends to use as the next shot. (2) Any monitor that shows a video source, except for the line (master) and off-the-air monitors.

Production house: A company that rents out a video studio and/or portable production gear.

Quadruplex: A scanning system of videotape recording that uses four rotating heads for recording and playing back video information. All quadruplex, or quad, recorders use 2-inch wide videotape.

Quartz light: A high-intensity light with a lamp consisting of a quartz or silica housing (instead of the customary glass) and a tungsten-halogen filament. Produces a very bright light of stable color temperature.

Rack focus: Varying the focus of a lens to change the areas that appear in and out of focus.

Rating: A statistical estimate of a program's popularity. Expressed as a percentage of the number of households watching among all television households.

Raw sound: See nat sound and wild sound.

Reader: A "copy" story, a story read by an anchor.

Reel: (1) A spool for tape or film. (2) Film on spool.

Reel-to-reel: A tape recorder that transports the tape past the heads from one reel, the supply reel, to the other reel, the takeup reel. Used instead of cassettes or cartridge recorders.

Registration: The accurate alignment of the three electronic pickup tube images in a camera to produce the composite color picture.
Remote: A television production produced outside the studio.
Resolution: The degree of clarity or definition of a picture. The higher the resolution, the sharper the image.
RF microphone: A wireless microphone.
Roll: (1) Graphics (usually credit copy) that move slowly up the screen. (2) Command to roll tape or film.
Rolling: A film, videotape, or audiotape has been started and is ready for playback or recording.
Runout signal: The recording of a few seconds of black at the end of each videotape recording in order to keep the screen in black for the video changeover.

Scanning area: The total area scanned by the television camera and reproduced on the studio monitor.
Scoop: A television floodlight.
Segue: An audio transition method whereby the preceding sound is faded out and the following sound faded in immediately afterwards.
Share: The audience measurement estimate expressed as the percentage of viewers watching a particular show among all those watching TV at the time.
Shot sheet: A list of every shot a particular camera has to get. May be attached to the camera to help the camera operator remember a shot sequence.
Shotgun microphone: A highly directional microphone with a shotgun-like barrel for picking up sounds over a great distance. Also called machine-gun microphone.
SI: Station identification (sometimes sponsor identification).
Signal-to-noise ratio: The relation of the strength of the desired video (picture) signal to the accompanying electronic interference, the noise. A high signal-to-noise ratio is desirable (strong video signal and weak noise).
Slate: A blackboard or chart used to identify visually a film or videotape take according to take number, recording date, and additional identification.
Slave: The machine recording the output of a master machine.
SMPTE: Society of Motion Picture and Television Engineers.
SMPTE time code: An eight-digit address code used to identify each videotape frame by hour, minute, second, and frame number for precision editing.
Snow: An electronic picture interference; looks like snow on the television screen.
SOF: Sound on film.
SOT: Sound on tape.
Sound bite: The short section of an interview edited into a video story. (Called "actuality" in a radio story.)
Special effects generator (SEG): An electronic device, usually installed in the video switcher, used to produce wipes, split screens, inserts, keys, and mattes.
Splice: (1) The point at which film or tape is physically joined. (2) The process of joining two pieces of film.
Split screen: A wipe carried only partway through; this makes two or more images appear on screen simultaneously.
Stability: The degree to which a camera (or camera chain) maintains its initial electronic setup.
Standup: The part of the TV news story where we see and hear the reporter.
Star filter: A filter-like lens attachment that changes high-intensity light sources into starlike light images.
Sticking: Image retention by the camera pickup tube. If the camera is focused too long on an object with strong contrast, the picture tube may retain a negative image of the contrasting scene, although another object is being photographed. Occurs especially in I-O (image-orthicon) tubes and occasionally in vidicons that have been in use for a relatively long time.
Stop-motion: A slow-motion effect where one frame jumps to the next, showing the object in a different position.
Storyboard: A series of sketches of the key visualization points of an event, accompanied by corresponding audio information.
Super: Short for superimposition. (1) The simultaneous showing of two full pictures on the small screen. (2) Lettering over a picture (with a title, for example).
Sweep reversal: Electronic scanning reversal; results in a mirror image (horizontal sweep reversal) or an upside-down image (vertical sweep reversal).
Switcher: (1) Engineer or production person who is doing the video switching (usually the TD). (2) A panel with rows of buttons that permits the selection of a specific video input and the change from one video source to another through a variety of transition devices or the simultaneous presentation of two or more video sources.
Sync track: A track on a tape of control pulses used to stabilize playback of the tape; control track.

Talent: The reporter or anchor on camera.
Talkback: A public address loudspeaker system from the control room to the studio. Also called SA (studio address) or PA (public address) system.
Talking heads: A disparaging term for a production consisting of shots of people talking.
Tape: A plastic ribbon approximately 1/1000-inch thick and from ¼ inch to 2 inches wide and coated with iron oxide (dull side). It is used to record magnetic impulses from video or audio sources.
TD: Technical director; in charge of technical studio crew. Usually does the switching during a telecast.
Teleconference: A large meeting transmitted by satellite distribution to a number of sites.
Teleprompter: A device that displays the script to the talent as prompt during taping.
Tilt: To point the camera up and down.
Time base corrector: An electronic accessory to a videotape recorder that helps to make playbacks or transfers electronically stable. A time base corrector helps to maintain picture quality even in dubbing-up operations.
Time code: See SMPTE time code.
Track: (1) A specific area of audio or videotape that contains program information or technical control information. (2) The sound portion of a motion picture film. (3) The accuracy with which a recorded videotape plays back.
Two-shot: Framing two people.

UHF: Ultra-high frequency; television transimission channels above 13 (channels 14-83).
Unidirectional: A type of pickup pattern in which the microphone can pick up sounds better from the front than from the sides or back.
Up-link: A site sending signals up to a satellite.

VCR: Video cassette recorder.
Vectorscope: A specially designed oscilloscope that is used to set up and align color equipment.
VHD: A videodisc format.
VHF: Very high frequency; television transmission channels 2 through 13.
VHS: A half-inch cassette standard used by JVC, Panasonic, RCA, and some other manufacturers (non-broadcast).
Video cartridge: A plastic container with a single reel from which the videotape is fed into a special recorder for recording and playback of short program segments.
Video cassette: A plastic container in which a videotape moves from supply to takeup reel, recording and playing back short program segments through a VCR. Similar in construction and function to the audio cassette recorder.
Video leader: Visual (and auditory) material that precedes any color videotape recording. For the standard video-portion blank tape for threading, the SMPTE prescribes 10 seconds of color bars, 15 seconds of slate information, 8 seconds of numbers or black, and 2 seconds of black ahead of the program information.
Video noise: A spurious electronic signal that interferes with the desired video signal. Generated unavoidably within the system, it shows up as snow or white or colored spots in the picture.
Video track: The area of the videotape that is used for recording the video information.
Videodisc: A video recording in a record-like disc format.
Videotape: A plastic, iron-oxide-coated tape of various widths (from 1/4-inch to 2 inches) for recording video and audio signals as well as additional technical code information.
Viewfinder: The small monitor on a camera that shows the camera operator the image of what is being shot.
VO: Voice-over. The voice we hear in a TV news story while we see scenes of the location or action.
Voicer: An oral accounting of a news story delivered by a reporter on radio.
VTR: Videotape recorder.
VU master: An audio meter that measures the intensity of sound in volume units.

Waveform monitor: A specially designed oscilloscope used to graphically display a video signal.
White-balance: To adjust a color so that it "sees" and reproduces white correctly, thus also reproducing all other colors correctly.
Wild sound: Recording nonsynchronous sound for either film or videotape; also nat sound or raw sound.
Wipe: A video transition where one image wipes across another to replace it.
Wraparound: A combination of a voicer with an actuality or raw sound or both. The radio reporter tells the story, using actuality material to illustrate it. On television, it's usually referred to as a wrap or a package.

XCU: Extreme closeup. Same as ECU.

Zoom lens: A variable-focus length lens. It can change from a wide shot to a closeup, or the reverse, in one continuous move.
Zoom ratio: The zoom range, from the widest angle position to the narrowest angle position, expressed in a ratio such as 10:1 (wide angle 17mm to a narrow angle 170mm).

Effective Public Service Announcements

by Annette H. Lee

It's a matter of deciding *to be or not to be:*

Brief: PSAs are getting shorter. FCC deregulation has changed radio and TV PSAs. Keep the scripted announcement to 10 seconds if you want maximum use. Offer 20-, 30-, and 60-second versions of the same information as alternatives for different time slots.

Concise: Focus on one item of information. You can't tell it all, even in a "long" 30-second message. Make it easy for the listener—or viewer—to grasp.

Clear: What is the objective of the message? What do you want the listener—or viewer—to do?

Specific: What audience do you want to reach? If it's not a wide listening or viewing audience, maybe a PSA is not your best method of message delivery.

Believable: Is the message relevant and interesting to your target audience?

Positive: Upbeat, sophisticated spots are "in," and negative approaches are out.

Unique: Use humor if it won't detract from your message. Search for the best possible on-air talent. Strive for interesting and effective settings or locations on video. Try some audio sound effects.

Creative: If your PSA appeals to those who schedule it into the station's daily log, it will be used more frequently. Watch the network commercials and national PSAs. How do your messages compare?

Timely: When is the best period of time to market your message via radio or TV? Aim to distribute your PSAs well in advance of their use period (or the time you need them to air) and when stations have more time available to

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give. How long should the spots run? On scripts and tape labels, specify the weeks or months the message should be broadcast.

Of service: If your message is of real service to the public, it will be used. If it's a public relations promotion piece for your institution, it may not get air time for free.

Accurate: Proof your script as carefully as you check other print pieces. Correcting PSA information distributed to DJs, community calendar producers, and other announcers is not easy.

Aware: You can't count on multiple usage of your script or produced message. After one or two readings, your PSA might get tossed. Don't depend too heavily on a PSA in your overall media strategy.

Savvy: Does your message fit into an overall media campaign? Can you use color slides from the video PSA in other print media? PSAs should not be the only vehicle you use to reach your target audience.

Professional: It's the broadcasters' ballgame, so deliver the PSA the way they can best use it. If you take the time to find out that they can use a 10- or 20-second message, have your produced spot or scripted copy fit those time slots, written in broadcast style.

Personal: Hand delivery of spots with an explanation of their purpose can sometimes make a difference with public service directors. Consider asking alumni to deliver scholarship and financial aid video and audio PSAs to stations in their towns elsewhere in your state. Also, a personal, "testimonial" approach can be an effective style of production—often better than elaborate animation or other video bells and whistles.

Receptive: Ask for feedback from program directors, public service directors, or producers. Learn from any creative professionals in advertising or broadcasting. Attempt to find out how the PSAs are received both on and off campus.

Reasonable: Most television PSAs are used in daytime slots. Few stations of any size will air your message in the evening or prime time periods. If you want your message to air during the evening news, plan to buy time.

Fair: Are you buying a display ad in the local newspaper while asking radio and TV stations for free PSA time to deliver the same message? What would be your reaction if you were the station's public service director? Encourage your institution's departments to try to balance their advertising buys between the print and broadcast media. Sometimes stations will throw in additional announcements or commercial spots when you buy a package to run over a period of time.

Why Public Service Advertising Doesn't Work

by Joe Adams

Although there are more public service advertisements on television and radio than ever before, many of them don't work. And a greater number are created that never even make it on the air.

Why do they fail? There are about 12 reasons. Actions can be taken in most of these areas to improve the effectiveness of public service advertisements.

1. *Few public service advertisers pre-test their ads.* Advertisements are created and distributed based on intuitive judgments of what works. Or they are copied from a commercial product ad. Very little consideration is given to whether the audience will recall important ideas, whether the message is personally relevant, believable, and interesting to the target audience. It doesn't cost a lot to pre-test advertising, but few advertisers do it.

2. *Ads are created by committees.* An ad agency doing public service work frequently has to please 12 people, 50 people, or 150 people! It's very difficult to get a group of health professionals, for example, to agree on a single idea. The idea often gets watered down and ends up saying nothing to the public.

3. *There is no media strategy.* Every public service advertiser wants to be on television! Yet more than 60 percent of the PSA spots on TV are in daytime slots. If you don't have a message to women, children, or shut-ins, you might be missing your target market. We encourage clients to let us develop a *media plan*, just as if we were buying time . . . figuring whom we want to reach, and which medium and which markets will deliver. Many advertisers often overlook print media in their quest for TV exposure. Magazines can deliver a very selective audience for public service advertisers.

4. *Most PSAs have no clear objectives.* I see spots and I have no idea what they want me to do. They simply don't tell me. Many of the health-related PSAs seem to be created just to *worry* people.

5. *PSAs have too much information.* A lot of nonprofit organizations only do one TV spot, so they want to tell everything in 30 seconds. You can't tell it all. Ads should have one central piece of usable information. We call it a "Gee-I-didn't-know-that" fact. We try to give the audience something they'll talk to other people about, thereby multiplying the effectiveness of the ad.

6. *Many public service advertisers are cheap.* If you can't afford to do it right, it's often better not to do it at all. Clients need to be realistic. If they only have $10,000 for production, they're not going to be able to do a national television campaign. The Advertising Council requires PSA clients to have production budgets of $150,000 to $200,000 *minimum*. The air time might be free, but it costs real bucks to create quality advertisements which effectively compete in the PSA arena.

7. *PSAs try to change behavior.* Many public service ads are destined to failure from the beginning. They're trying to *change attitude* or *alter behavior.* It's a much more difficult task than selling a product that people know and want. We have been some-

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what successful in incorporating direct response techniques into PSAs in order to get respondents to act. Yet it is very difficult to track them and finally measure what effect the commercials have on actual behavior patterns.

8. *Material is distributed at the wrong time.* A lot of public service material gets sent out "when it's finished" rather than when it's likely to get used. We know, for example, that there are months in the year when television stations have more availabilities (usually May or November). We try to distribute material to TV stations when they have more time available to give. Publishers and radio stations have their slow times as well.

9. *Public service advertisers can't obtain enough frequency to have impact.* This is probably the biggest reason PSAs don't work. For example, public service advertising works best and tests best when the medium is bought. When we can control the medium, we can control reach and frequency. But when we have to depend on donated time and space, the play we get is irregular at best. Obviously, most organizations can't afford to buy time. There is no single way to solve the problem, but we can improve the use rate by:

- concentrating a PSA campaign in a single month or a specific period of time,
- releasing the campaign in waves,
- re-releasing the ads about six months after the first set are sent, and
- using local volunteers to deliver material to the station and monitor continual usage.

10. *Too many PSAs use celebrity talent.* Using a well-known personality always seems like assured success. In fact, in most tests the personality gets in the way of the message. The audience remembers the personality, but they never get *your* message. There are, of course, exceptions. But if the personality doesn't have a logical link to the cause, chances are good that your ad will miss the mark.

11. *PSAs are prepared in the wrong form.* Lots of public service advertisers are still distributing 60-second TV spots even though 40 percent of all aired PSAs are 30 seconds in length and 32 percent of all aired spots are 10 seconds. Advertisers need to send what is most usable to the medium. A growing number of advertisers are using lifts from TV spots as their radio spots. These rarely work. Radio is not TV without the pictures. Moreover, many radio stations are offended by not getting material created especially for radio.

12. *PSAs contain too much self-interest.* Just because an organization is "not-for-profit" doesn't mean it's entitled to public service time. A lot of public service commercials are turning out to be *public relations messages* that benefit the organization more than the public. If the message isn't of importance to the public, it's not going to get on the air for free.

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